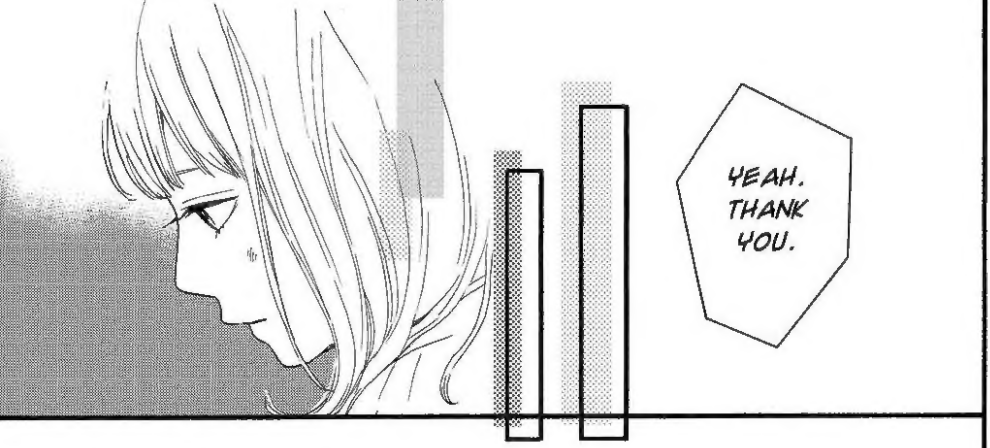
# CHAPTER 18

AUTHOR: TAKANO ICHIGO

1 2 2 4
HELLO, NAHO?
SORRY I COULDN'T MAKE IT AFTER ALL TODAY.
IT'S OKAY...
GRANDMA GOT SICK. I'M AT THE HOSPITAL WITH HER NOW.
I SEE...
IS SHE OKAY?
YEAH.
I'M SORRY. WHEN TODAY'S CHRIST-MAS EVE...
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
YOU SHOULD BE WITH YOUR GRANDMA RIGHT NOW.




DECEMBER 31ST
THE SIX OF US HAD PLANS TOGETHER FOR CHRISTMAS EVE, BUT KAKERU SUDDENLY COULDN'T COME.

WHEN I ASKED HIM ON THE 24TH WHAT HAPPENED, HE TOLD ME, "GRANDMA GOT SICK. I'M AT THE HOSPITAL WITH HER NOW."

NEXT YEAR...
...SEE HIM NEXT YEAR.
I HOPE I CAN...
...THE FACT OF HIS GRAND-MOTHER GETTING SICK, RIGHT?
IT CAN'T BE HELPED, BECAUSE WE CAN'T CHANGE...

LET'S...
...SEE A LOT MORE OF EACH OTHER NEXT YEAR...
...KAKERU.
NAHO!
TAKA-CHAN!
HI! IS YOUR DATE OVER?
WE JUST RAN INTO EACH OVER THERE!
KAKERU SAID HE'S GOING TO BE LATE.
HOW ABOUT SUWA?
HE'S NOT HERE YET.
HE SAID HE COULDN'T MAKE IT, REMEMBER?

WE GATHERED AT FUKASHI SHRINE ON NEW YEAR'S EVE. KAKERU WAS LATE, BUT HE CAME.

WE PLAYED ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS. KAKERU AND I LOST, SO THE TWO OF US HAD TO GO BUY DRINKS FOR EVERYONE.

KAKERU SEEMED DIFFERENT THAT NIGHT. HE DIDN'T TALK MUCH.

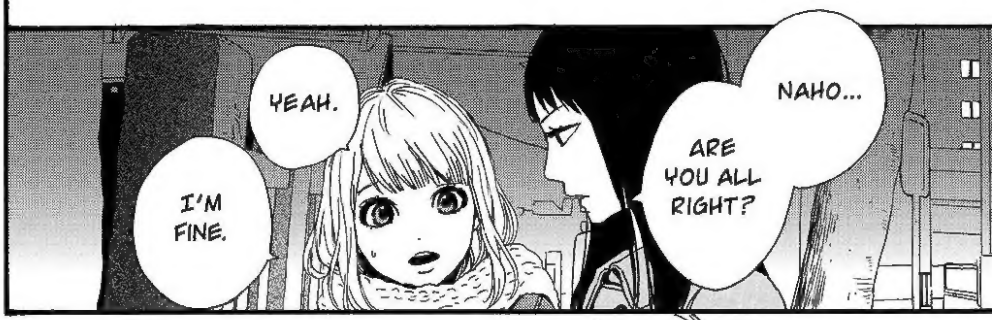
WHEN THE TWO OF US WERE ALONE, WE TALKED ABOUT HIS GRANDMOTHER.

HE MUTTERED, "IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO GRANDMA, I'D BE ALONE."

AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HE MEANT.
I SAID, "YOU WON'T BE ALONE."
I TOLD HIM, "RIGHT NOW, LET'S FORGET ABOUT OUR TROUBLES AND HAVE A GOOD TIME."

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, KAKERU LOOKED ANGRY AT ME.

"WHAT DO YOU KNOW, NAHO?" HE ASKED.



IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, WE'LL BE HERE...
...SO CALL ON US ANYTIME.
AND EVEN IF YOU FIGHT, YOU CAN ALWAYS MAKE UP!
YOU'LL BE FINE, LIKE ALWAYS.
IT'S LIKE THEY SAY: A SPAT IS EVIDENCE THAT YOU'RE CLOSE TO EACH OTHER.
RIGHT, HAGITA?
THAT'S RIGHT. LIKE US.
WAIT, NO! IDIOT! WE'RE NOT CLOSE!
You just admitted you were!

I MADE KAKERU ANGRY THAT DAY.

HE TOLD ME, "I DON'T WANT TO TALK ANYMORE" AND "STAY AWAY FROM ME."

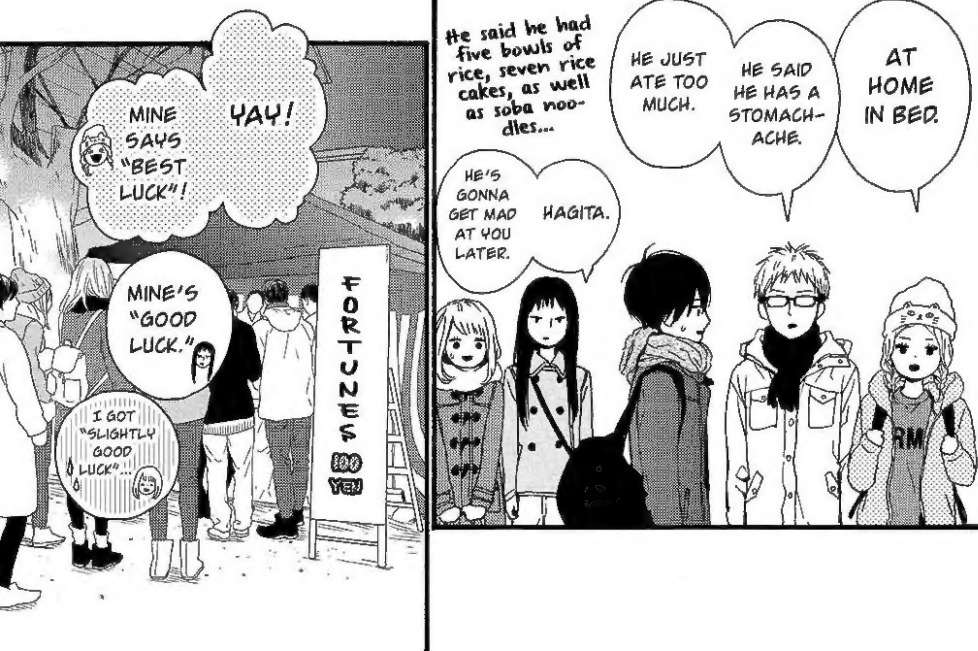
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAD DONE WRONG.

WHEN I THINK OF IT NOW, I REALIZE WHAT A TERRIBLE THING I SAID. "FORGET ABOUT OUR TROUBLES." SHEESH.

I WANT YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT KAKERU AND WATCH WHAT YOU SAY SO YOU DON'T HURT HIM.

EVEN IF IT DOESN'T GO WELL, BE SURE TO APOLOGIZE THIS TIME.

Y...
YOU LOOK CUTE TOO, KAKERU!
HA HA HA
THANKS.
WHERE'S SUWA?
MAYBE I SHOULD'VE SAID HE LOOKED "HANDSOME" INSTEAD?
Hm?
?

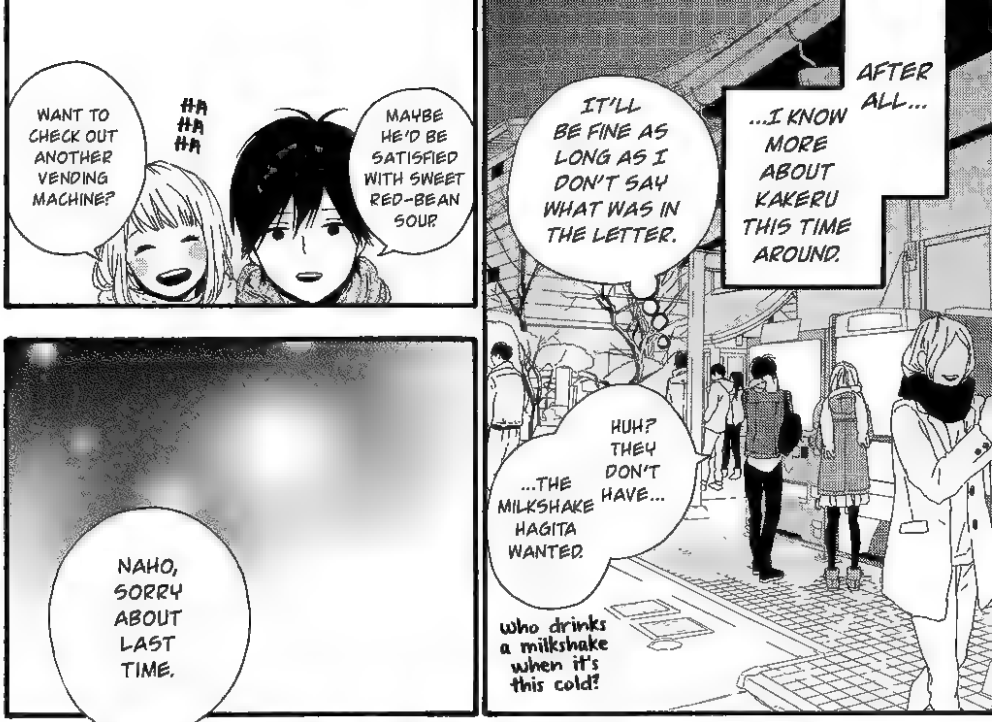

He said he had five bowls of rice, seven rice cakes, as well as soba noodles...
HE JUST ATE TOO MUCH.
HE SAID HE HAS A STOMACH-ACHE.
AT HOME IN BED.
HE'S GONNA GET MAD AT YOU LATER.
HAGITA.
YAY!
MINE SAYS "BEST LUCK"!
MINE'S "GOOD LUCK."
I GOT "SLIGHTLY GOOD LUCK"...
FORTUNES 100 YEN

REALLY? ALL RIGHT!
THE SAME AS ME!
I GOT "SLIGHTLY GOOD LUCK," TOO...
"SLIGHTLY GOOD LUCK."
WHAT FORTUNE DID YOU GET?
we wanna know!
HM?
HOW ABOUT YOU, KAKERU?
MINE SAYS...
IT'S TRUE.
HE'S DIFFERENT TONIGHT.
HAGITA, BUY US SOMETHING WARM TO DRINK.
THEY'RE SELLING SWEET SAKE OVER THERE.
I'LL TAKE MILK TEA.
I COULD GO FOR CAFE AU LAIT...
ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS!
Fukashi Shrine
HAPPY NEW YEAR

HAGITA, DO YOU HAVE A PHONE?
Ah! LET'S TRY CALLING SUWA.
CALL HIM ON YOUR OWN!
IT'LL BE OKAY.

THEY'VE BEEN CHANGING LITTLE BY LITTLE.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
NAHO...
...AND KAKERU.

I HOPE THEY'LL BE OKAY.
THE WAY NAHO IS NOW, THEY WILL.
RMY


WANT TO CHECK OUT ANOTHER VENDING MACHINE?
HA HA HA
MAYBE HE'D BE SATISFIED WITH SWEET RED-BEAN SOUP.
AFTER ALL...
...I KNOW MORE ABOUT KAKERU THIS TIME AROUND.
IT'LL BE FINE AS LONG AS I DON'T SAY WHAT WAS IN THE LETTER.
HUH? THEY DON'T HAVE...
...THE MILKSHAKE HAGITA WANTED.
who drinks a milkshake when it's this cold?
NAHO, SORRY ABOUT LAST TIME.

I'D BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.
EVERY DAY...
SUDDENLY BAILING ON YOU ON CHRISTMAS EVE...
OH. THAT'S OKAY.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

NEXT YEAR...
NEXT YEAR, LET'S BE TOGETHER!
HA HA!
AS LONG AS MY GRANDMA DOESN'T GET SICK AGAIN.
LET'S...
...MAKE A PROMISE TO EACH OTHER, KAKERU.
YEAH.
IS YOUR GRAND-MOTHER OKAY NOW?
SHE WAS DOING BETTER TODAY.
AT FIRST, SHE JUST HAD A REGULAR COLD...
...BUT IT TOOK A TURN FOR THE WORSE ON CHRISTMAS EVE AND ALMOST TURNED INTO PNEUMONIA.

OH... SO THAT'S IT...
I WONDER IF KAKERU WAS WORRIED.
IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO GRANDMA...
...I'D BE ALONE.
BR-DUMP

D... DON'T WORRY...
AFTER ALL, THE LETTER SAYS...
...WE MEET HIS GRAND-MOTHER LONG AFTER HE DIES.
SHE'LL STILL BE AROUND TEN YEARS FROM NOW.
YOUR GRAND-MOTHER WILL BE FINE.
I THOUGHT THINGS WOULD BE FINE...
...WITH MY MOTHER, TOO.

WRONG ANSWER!
SORRY.
AH...

SORRY!
I'M GETTING ALL GLOOMY ON YOU.

PHEW
ほっ
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I WAS SCARED...
..FOR A SECOND THERE.

I THOUGHT I SAID THE WRONG THING.
I THOUGHT THINGS WOULD BE FINE WITH MY MOTHER, TOO.
I HAD NO IDEA SHE WAS GOING TO DIE ON ME.
I STILL WISH I'D BEEN WITH HER AT THE TIME.

THIS IS KAKERU'S...
...BAD HABIT.
THAT FAKE SMILE...
...JUST MAKES ME EVEN MORE ANXIOUS.
NAHO.
WOULD YOU MIND IF I WENT HOME EARLY TONIGHT?

I'M WORRIED ABOUT GRANDMA...
...AND WANT TO BE WITH HER.
...
IF POSSIBLE...
...CAN YOU STAY A LITTLE LONGER?
I'M SCARED.
RIGHT NOW I'M SCARED...
...TO LEAVE KAKERU ALONE.
YOUR GRANDMOTHER WILL BE ALL RIGHT.
I PROMISE YOU, SHE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?

HOW?
I CAN'T TELL YOU...
BUT...
...YOU JUST GOT HERE... YOU CAN STAY A LITTLE LONGER...
IF HE'S WITH ALL OF US, I'M SURE KAKERU WON'T WORRY.
IT WAS THE SAME ON THE DAY OF THE OPENING CEREMONY.
...
HOW CAN YOU SAY EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT?
YOU HAVE NO IDEA!

AH!
NO...
"ALL RIGHT."
AS IF PEOPLE CAN DECIDE WHETHER SOMETHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT!
WAIT.
ONE MORE TIME...
I DIDN'T KNOW HOW MUCH SHE WAS SUFFERING.
SO MUCH THAT DEATH WAS PREFERABLE, WHILE I THOUGHT EVERYTHING WAS "ALL RIGHT."
AND I LEFT MY MOTHER ALONE!
I WANT TO DO IT OVER AGAIN!

I...
...KILLED HER!

I HAVE TO...
SOME-THING...
...SAY SOME-THING.
...THAT WILL PUT KAKERU'S MIND AT EASE.
WAIT.
SORRY... I'M GOING HOME.
I HAVE TO APOLO-GIZE.
FWAP
DON'T.

I DON'T WANT TO...
...TALK ANYMORE.
STAY AWAY...
...FROM ME.

I'M SORRY...
...WASN'T I ABLE TO CHANGE IT?
WHY...
IT'S ALL MY FAULT.
HELLO, SUWA?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING RIGHT NOW?
I'M BUSY!
DOING WHAT?
WATCHING THE SONG CONTEST.
I TOLD YOU YOU'D BETTER COME!

DO YOU THINK...
...THAT IF YOU TOLD NAHO HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT HER, KAKERU COULDN'T BE SAVED?
...
IF THAT'S THE CASE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY.
I PROMISE YOU WE'LL HELP KAKERU, SO BE HONEST WITH HER ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS.

SUWA...
IT'S KIND OF LATE IN THE DAY TO SAY THIS NOW...
...BUT I DON'T THINK CHANGING THE FUTURE IS NECES-SARILY THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
HEY!
JACK-ASS!
SINCE YOU WERE A NO-SHOW, I HAD A HELL OF A TIME FINDING THE MEETUP SPOT.
WHAT AM I, A LAND-MARK?

TAKE THE ATHLETIC FESTIVAL, FOR EXAMPLE.
BY CHANGING THE FUTURE...
...IT HAS AN EFFECT NOT ONLY ON KAKERU, BUT ON OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
THE BLUE TEAM WAS SUPPOSED TO WIN, BUT BECAUSE OF US, THE RED TEAM WON.
...SO THE GUY WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE FIRST CAME IN SECOND PLACE.
KAKERU WON FIRST PLACE IN THE RELAY...
HEY.
YOU LISTENING TO ME?
ignoring me?
LET ME TALK TO HIM.
SAY YOU CHANGE THE FUTURE...
...AND THAT IN TURN CHANGES SOMEONE ELSE'S FUTURE. I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S RIGHT.

BECAUSE I KNOW YOU COULD PROTECT NAHO!
...
SUWA!
I TOLD YOU I WAS ROOTING FOR NAHO AND KAKERU...
...BUT IT'S NOT JUST THEM. I WANT TO CHEER YOU ON, TOO.
I THOUGHT I DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE ON MY SIDE.
WHAT THE HECK, YOU GUYS?
WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?
I'M HANGING UP.
WHAT?
SUWA?
THE NEW YEAR WILL BE UPON US IN TEN MINUTES.
THE NEW YEAR WILL BE UPON US...
HUH?
RM

I STILL DON'T REALLY KNOW KAKERU.
BEEP
SUWA...
...OR WHICH WORDS WILL MAKE HIM HAPPY.
I DON'T KNOW WHICH WORDS WILL HURT HIM...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN HIS HEART.
NO MATTER WHICH WORDS I CHOSE...
...I HURT KAKERU WITHOUT REALIZING IT.
NAHO...

ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M SORRY... SUWA...
I COULDN'T MANAGE TO...
YEAH. IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I'M SORRY...

HE DOESN'T HATE YOU.

AND EVEN IF HE DOES...

...IT'LL WORK OUT.

IF YOU GUYS HAVE PROBLEMS...
...I'LL GRAB KAKERU BY THE SCRUFF OF THE NECK...
...AND HAUL HIM BEFORE YOU LIKE I DID BEFORE.
I'LL WATCH OVER YOU TWO...
...TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T DRIFT APART.
SO NAHO...
...DON'T BE SCARED.
TRY TO MAKE EVEN MORE PROGRESS WITH HIM.

TREASURE THE TIME...
...YOU SPEND WITH KAKERU.
YEAH...
THANK YOU.
NOW GET HIM BACK HERE.
IF YOU DON'T HURRY, IT'LL BE NEW YEARS!
RIGHT!
17 STEP

TAKAKO IS...
...GONNA BE PISSED AT ME.
"I DON'T WANT TO TALK ANYMORE."
#UFF
#UFF
"STAY AWAY FROM ME."
IF...

FROM THIS DAY ON, THERE'S DISTANCE BETWEEN KAKERU AND ME.
WE DON'T TALK AS MUCH ANYMORE, EITHER.

I NEVER GOT TO APOLOGIZE TO KAKERU BEFORE HE DIED.

IF WHAT HAPPENED TONIGHT WAS THE TRIGGER...

...THAT MADE KAKERU SHUT HIS HEART TO ME...

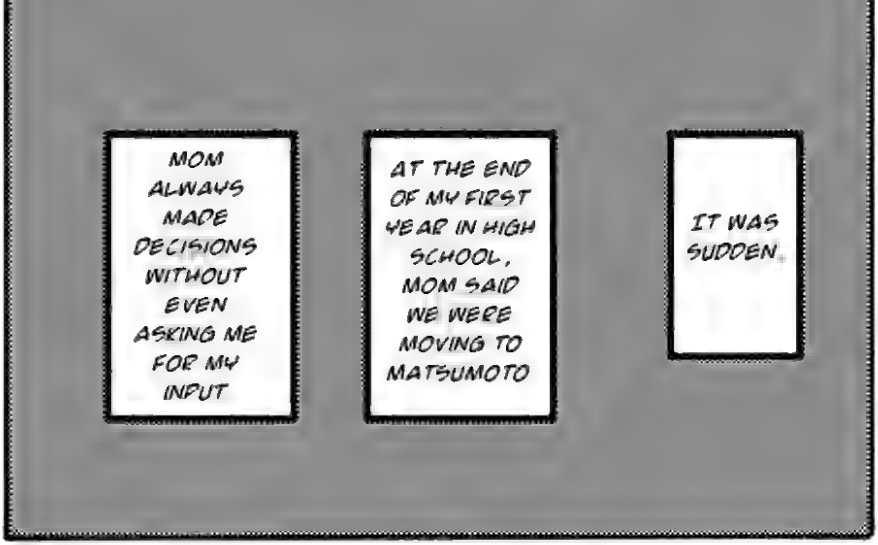
...IS IT MY FAULT...
CRACK
...THAT KAKERU DIED?

PRRRR
PRRRR

KAKERU...
PICK UP...
5...
4...
3...
2...
1...

IF...
...PARTS OF THE FUTURE CAN BE CHANGED...
...AND PARTS OF THE FUTURE CANNOT...
...WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE KAKERU?

# CHAPTER 19


IT WAS SUDDEN.
AT THE END OF MY FIRST YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL, MOM SAID WE WERE MOVING TO MATSUMOTO
MOM ALWAYS MADE DECISIONS WITHOUT EVEN ASKING ME FOR MY INPUT

HEY, MOM.

WHERE'D YOU PUT MY SOCCER BAG AND SPIKES?
HUH?
I THREW THAT STUFF AWAY.
WHAT?
RATTLE
RATTLE

AFTER ALL, YOU PROMISED NOT TO JOIN A CLUB AT YOUR NEW SCHOOL, RIGHT?
SO YOU DON'T NEED THOSE THINGS.
THEY WERE ALL BEATEN-UP ANYWAY.
GIMME A DAMN BREAK!
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO TOSS 'EM!
THERE WAS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT TO ME!!
SHE NEVER CHANGES.
バタン!!
SLAM

KAKERU-KUN!
LET'S WALK HOME TOGETHER!
...MOM GOT DIVORCED WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING TO ME.
EVEN WHEN I WAS LITTLE...
CHINO-SAN.
COOL. Though she can get a scary look in her eyes.
CHEERFUL. Talks a lot.
AZU?
SUWA-KUN.
HE'S A REALLY NICE GUY. Even if he is tall and loud...
...
TAKA-MIYA-SAN.
...
Glasses.
HAGITA-KUN.

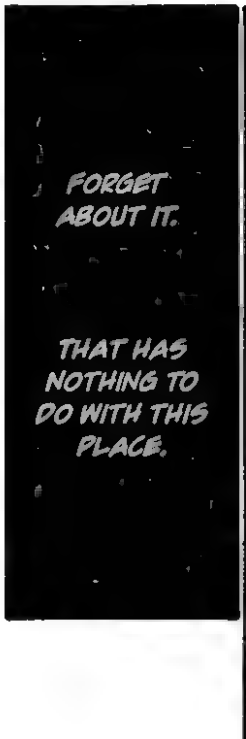
BZZ
BZZ
Mom
Where are you? I have to go to the hospital. Don't screw around, just come home right now.
I'M CURIOUS ABOUT HER.
TRADE ME FOR YOUR CURRY BUN!
I'LL APOLOGIZE TO HER LATER.
I'M GONNA FORGET ABOUT MOM FOR THE MOMENT AND JUST HAVE FUN.
WHAT A PAIN.
SHE CAN GO BY HER-SELF, CAN'T SHE?
SURE.
KAKERU-KUN, LET'S GO!
LET'S DITCH HAGITA.
HEY!
I can't go with you right now. You're not a child and can get there on your own, right? Don't ruin my life.

THAT WAS THE LAST CONVERSATION I HAD WITH MOM.
SHE DIDN'T TEXT ME BACK.
MORNING!
MORN-ING!
DID YOU BRING YOUR SWEAT-SHIRT?
MORN-ING!
EVERYONE'S ACTING NORMAL.
WELL, OF COURSE...
THEY DON'T KNOW.

KAKERU!
GOOD MORNING!
...THE WORLD WOULDN'T CHANGE.
...AND EVEN IF THEY DID...
NOBODY KNOWS MY MOM IS DEAD...
LUCKY HIM.
SUWA IS IN THE SOCCER CLUB?
HUH.
I DON'T WANT TO, ESPE-CIALLY.
NAH.
...
...AT THE BALL GAME TOURNA-MENT.
I WANTED TO PLAY SOCCER, TOO...

SORRY!
CLASS 3 WON THE GIRLS' SOFTBALL FINAL!
GAME SET!
I'M DONE WITH ALL THAT.

I REALLY AM SORRY.
THANK YOU, AZU!
YOU DID YOUR BEST!
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, AZU!
I MESSED UP!
IT'S MY FAULT... I'M SORRY...


FORGET ABOUT IT.
THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS PLACE.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, NARUSE?
THIS IS YOUR FAULT!
WE DON'T NEED YOU ON THE TEAM!

I SHOULD'VE DONE IT, EVEN IF WE LOST.
...BECAUSE I BOWED OUT.
AZU ONLY TOOK ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BATTING...
SHE'S DEPRESSED AFTER WHAT HAPPENED.
...I'M WORRIED ABOUT AZU.
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU SEEM DOWN.
MY WORK IS DONE HERE.
YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG, TAKAMIYA-SAN.
I'M THE ONE WHO STOPPED YOU.
IF IT BOTHERS YOU, THEN IT BOTHERS ME.
IT'S MY FAULT YOU DIDN'T BAT.
OKAY?

...REMINDS ME OF ME.
SHE KIND OF...
TAKE CARE.
I'M SORRY.
...OKAY.
I CAN'T JOIN THE SOCCER CLUB, AFTER ALL.
SORRY, SUWA.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY SHE'S ALWAYS ON MY MIND.
BUT IF YOU EVER DO WANT TO JOIN, THE DOOR'S ALWAYS OPEN. I'LL BE WAITING.
OKAY.
THANKS.
OKAY, I'LL TELL THE SENIORS.
I SEE...

I HAD A BLAST PLAYING SOCCER WITH SUWA.
...I DON'T WANNA QUIT.
WHEN YOU LOOK LIKE THAT...
THE SENIORS WERE ALL REALLY NICE, TOO.
BUT...
...I MADE A PROMISE TO MOM.
I REGRET THAT.
...ON THE DAY OF THE OPENING CERE-MONY.
I'M SORRY I BROKE ONE PROM-ISE...

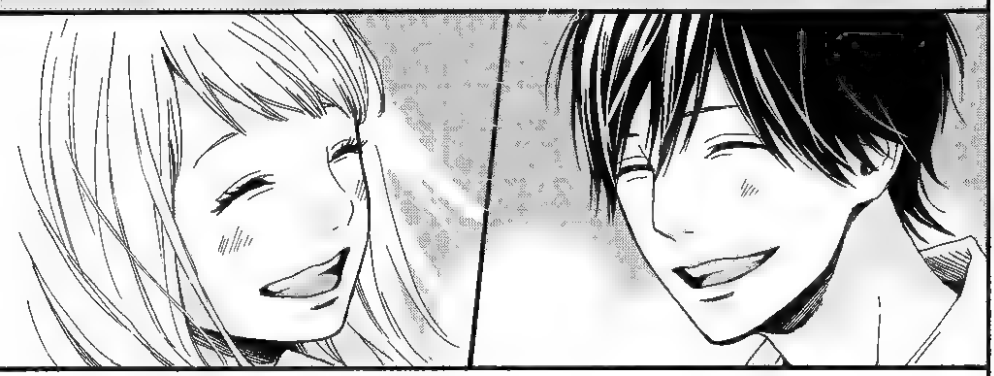
KAKERU!
HERE!
SWISH
THAT'S COLD!
WHAT?!
WA WA WA
IT'S ICE!
From shaved ice!
YOU WERE JUST STANDING THERE THE LONGEST TIME, SO WE FIGURED YOU MUST BE GETTING HOT.
HEY, YOU GUYS, QUIT SCREWING AROUND AND GET TO WORK.
WAIT!
WHAT KIND OF OUTFIT IS THAT, HAGITA-KUN?
HUH?
I FELL IN THE POOL AND GOT MY CLOTHES WET.
SO I BORROWED HERS.
YOU BORROWED THOSE CLOTHES?

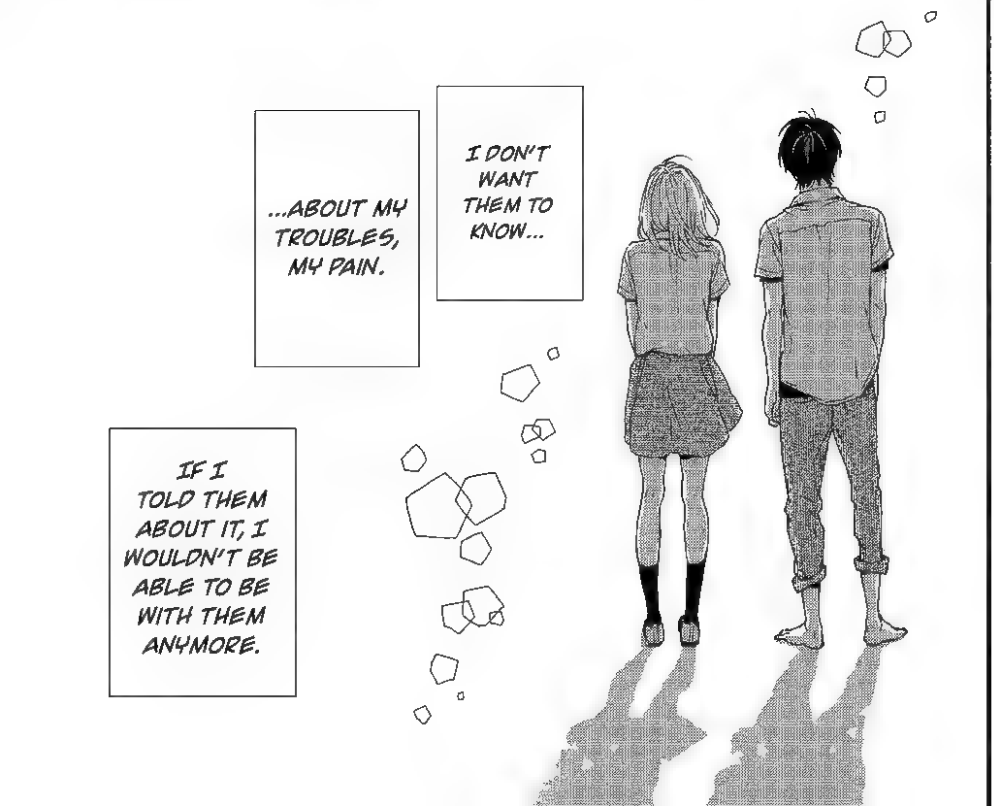
I HAVE FUN...

...WHEN I'M WITH EVERY-ONE.

THERE ARE ALWAYS A LOT OF LAUGHS...

...WHEN WE'RE TOGETH-ER.



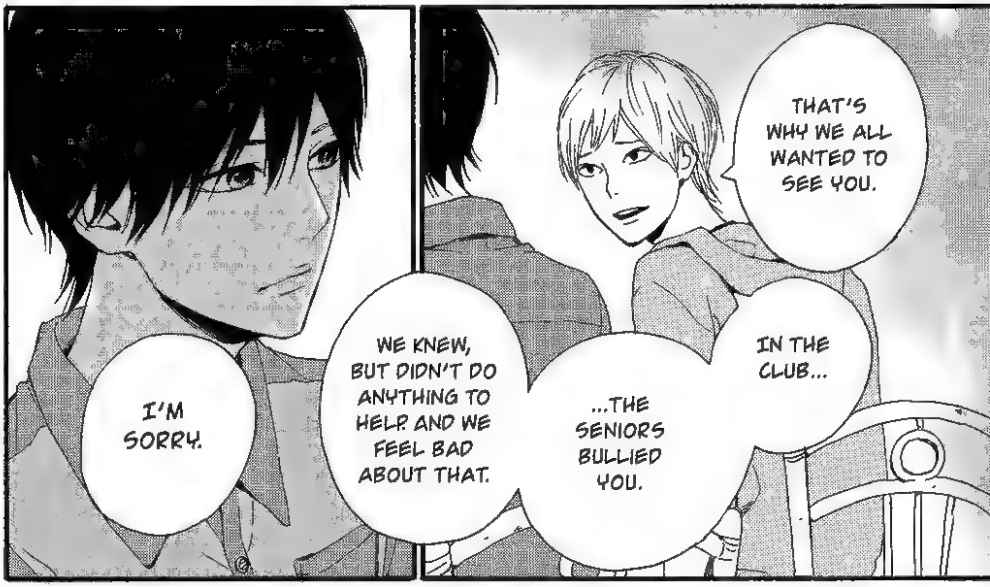


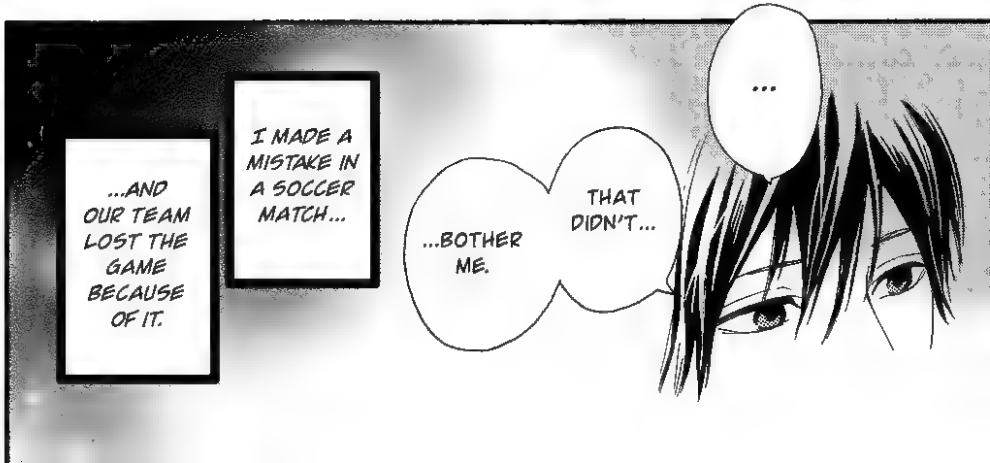
I DON'T WANT THEM TO HATE ME...

...SO I'LL KEEP ALL THAT BOTTLED UP INSIDE FOREVER.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HEAR THAT VOICE AGAIN.
A CLASS-MATE FROM MY HIGH SCHOOL IN TOKYO.
HEY, HOW ABOUT COMING OVER FOR SUMMER VACATION?
IT'D BE COOL TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
NAH...
I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT OVER THE SUMMER.
I DON'T ESPE-CIALLY WANT TO SEE HIM.
THEN HOW ABOUT NEXT MONTH?
THE OTHER GUYS IN THE CLUB WANNA SEE YOU AGAIN, TOO.
'KAY?
EVEN THOUGH WE'RE APART, WE'RE STILL FRIENDS!
...
I COULD DO NEXT MONTH.
OH, WELL...
I GUESS THEY WERE MY FRIENDS.
NARUSE!

AH...
I KIND OF FEEL LIKE I ALREADY WANT TO GO BACK HOME.
WHAT IS IT?
SO LISTEN, NARUSE...
THERE'S SOMETHING WE WANNA APOLOGIZE TO YOU ABOUT.


THAT'S WHY WE ALL WANTED TO SEE YOU.
IN THE CLUB...
...THE SENIORS BULLIED YOU.
WE KNEW, BUT DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP. AND WE FEEL BAD ABOUT THAT.
I'M SORRY.


...
THAT DIDN'T...
...BOTHER ME.
I MADE A MISTAKE IN A SOCCER MATCH...
...AND OUR TEAM LOST THE GAME BECAUSE OF IT.

EVEN THOUGH I WAS A FRESHMAN, I WAS TREATED LIKE AN ACE.
...BUT THE COACH KEPT PUTTING ME IN.
THE SENIORS TOLD ME NOT TO PLAY IN ANY MORE MATCHES...
WE LOST BY THAT ONE GOAL.
I GOT CALLED ON A FOUL IN FRONT OF OUR GOAL, AND IT BECAME A PENALTY KICK.
AND I KNEW YOU GUYS WEREN'T THAT FOND OF ME, EITHER.
THAT'S WHEN THEY STARTED BULLYING ME.
THE SENIORS DIDN'T SEEM TO LIKE THAT.
HUH? WHY NOT?!
...NO, I DON'T.
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN OVER THERE, TOO?
HEY!
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE NOT PLAYING... BECAUSE OF US...
NOTHING LIKE THAT.
THAT'S WHY...
...I DON'T REALLY THINK OF YOU AS FRIENDS.
Ah!
HOW'S LIFE IN NAGANO?
YOU PLAY SOCCER THERE?

MAYBE I CAN TELL THESE GUYS.
MY MOM...
...COMMITTED SUICIDE.
AND IT'S MY FAULT.
THE REGRET EATS ME UP EVERY DAY.
I CAN'T FORGIVE MYSELF.
THAT'S WHY I'M THROUGH PLAYING SOCCER.
EVERY DAY, I THINK...
...I SHOULD JUST DISAPPEAR.
THAT I'M BETTER OFF DEAD...
MAYBE THEY'LL LAUGH...
...AT ME.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT, NARUSE?
HA HA HA
WHAT? IT'S A JOKE?
HA HA HA
YOU HAD ME FOR A SECOND THERE!
Don't do that! Ha ha!
YOU'RE NOT THAT KIND OF GUY, NARUSE!
DON'T KILL YOURSELF, YOU HEAR?
THAT'S THE COWARD'S WAY OUT.
BESIDES, IF YOU DIE, IT'LL LEAVE A BAD AFTER-TASTE IN OUR MOUTHS.
THERE, SEE?
I FIGURED.
I'M GLAD I DIDN'T TELL THEM.

IT'S...
...NO JOKE.
...
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
CAN YOU TELL ME...
...YOUR NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH?
...NARUSE...
...KAKERU...

A HOS-
PITAL?
WHAT IS
THIS?
OH...
SWELL...
I LIVED.
KAKERU...
THANK
GOOD-
NESS.
I RAN SOME
TESTS, BUT
YOU CHECKED
OUT OKAY.
WE'LL
HAVE YOU
STAY HERE
FOR ANOTHER
WEEK,
THOUGH...
...AND AFTER
THAT, YOU'LL BE
EXAMINED AT A
PSYCHIATRIC
FACILITY.

DON'T EVER DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT AGAIN.
I'M NOT GOING TO ANY HOSPITAL.
WHY NOT?
THE DOCTOR SAID ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TALK TO THEM.
I'M NOT GOING.
AFTER ALL...
...I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
I DON'T WANNA GO.
BUT...
I SAID I'M NOT GOING!
CRASH

I'M SORRY I COULDN'T DO ANY-THING TO HELP.
IF YOU'RE THAT ADAMANT ABOUT IT, YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO.
WELL, THAT'S FINE.
...AND LIVE.
I HAVE TO GET MY ACT TO-GETHER.
STAND UP STRAIGHT, LOOK AHEAD...
...AM I DOING?
WHAT THE HELL...
CAUSING TROU-BLE...
HURTING GRAND-MA...

HUFF
HUFF
カラン
CLANG
KAKERU!
MY LEG...
DAMMIT.
I'M SORRY.
...THAT'S MY FAULT.
ANOTHER LOSS...

"DON'T FEEL BAD, KAKERU."
"IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT."
I HAVE TO LIVE...
...BUT I HAVE NO HOPE.
BUT IF I'D DIED, THEN...
...I WOULDN'T HAVE MESSED UP THE RELAY.
WHAT WOULD A WORLD WITHOUT ME BE LIKE?
I HAVE TO BECOME STRONGER.
THIS ISN'T WORKING.
Suwa Hiroto
Are you free tomorrow? Let's bury that time capsule we were talking about last time!

THEY WERE ORIGI-NALLY...

...FIVE ANYWAY.

THEY WOULD JUST GO BACK TO THAT.

I DON'T WANT THEM...

...TO EVER CHANGE.

MAYBE I ALWAYS SHOULD HAVE STAYED ALONE.

YOU WON'T BE ALONE, KAKERU.

"I'M GONNA FORGET ABOUT MOM FOR THE MOMENT AND JUST HAVE FUN."
...AND HAVE A GOOD TIME.
LET'S FORGET ABOUT OUR TROUBLES FOR TONIGHT...
...NO, I'M NOT.
YOU'RE KIND OF GLUM TONIGHT.
WHY...
DON'T PATRONIZE ME!
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I DID.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW, NAHO?
...WOULD YOU SAY SOME-THING SO CRUEL?

...WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?
IF IT'S NOT MY FAULT...
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT!
DON'T FEEL BAD, KAKERU!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
...HOW HARD IT'S BEEN FOR ME. HOW DYING SEEMS PREFERABLE!
NOW YOU SAY IT'S ALL RIGHT WHEN YOU HAVE NO IDEA...
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT IF I LEFT MY MOM ALONE.
YOU KILLED MY MOTHER.
...SO DON'T SMILE LIKE EVERYTHING'S FINE!
YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING...

NO.
I'M NOT...
...SAYING THAT TO NAHO.
SLAP
STAY AWAY FROM ME.
I DON'T...
...WANT TO TALK ANYMORE.

I'M SORRY, NAHO.
...GOING TO HURT YOU ANY MORE.
I'M NOT...
I'M SORRY.
FROM NOW ON...
...LEAVE ME ALONE.
HAVE TO GET MY ACT TOGETHER.
HAVE TO BECOME STRONG.
BUT...
...WHAT SHOULD I DO?

I WANT TO DO IT OVER.
ALL OF IT, FROM THE BEGINNING.
WE NEVER...
...SHOULD HAVE BECOME FRIENDS.
...SHE WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.
IF I...
...MOM, GRANDMA, NAHO, EVERYONE.
I WOULDN'T HAVE HURT...
...HAD KEPT MY PROMISE TO MOM THEN...

EASY FOR YOU TO SAY.
"EVEN IF THE GOING IS TOUGH NOW, HANG IN THERE AND IT'LL GET BETTER."
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW THAT FOR SURE UNLESS YOU DIE.
"A LOT OF PEOPLE WOULD BE SAD IF YOU DIED."
PEOPLE OFTEN SAY,
HANGING IN THERE... LIVING... IS THE TOUGHEST THING THERE IS.
ON NEW YEAR'S EVE...
KAKERU.
...I TOLD NAHO HOW I FELT ABOUT HER.
IF IT WOULD RELEASE ME FROM MY RE-GRETS...
...I'D BE READY TO DIE ANYTIME.

CONFESS MY FEELINGS?
WHY WOULD I?
AREN'T YOU GONNA DO THE SAME?
I'M NOT IN LOVE WITH NAHO...
...
...OR ANYTHING.
I THINK YOU AND NAHO...
...SHOULD JUST TAKE THE PLUNGE AND GO OUT WITH EACH OTHER.
YOU HAVE MY BLESSING.

OKAY...
THANKS.
DID YOU CATCH THE SOCCER GAME LAST NIGHT?
The one late at night...
HELL YEAH, I SAW IT!
THEY'RE GOING ON ABOUT SOCCER AGAIN.
GUYS, PICK A TOPIC I CAN JOIN IN ON!
I WONDER WHAT NAHO'S RESPONSE TO HIM WAS.
BUT...
...IF NAHO AND SUWA DO START DATING, I'LL HAVE PEACE OF MIND.
I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO ASK.
THAT'S THE TRUTH.

IS THAT VALENTINE'S DAY CHOCOLATE?
WAA!
YOU GIVING IT TO SOME-BODY?

...YEAH.
SOME-BODY YOU REALLY LIKE?
HUH...
...YEAH.

HUH.
IS IT SUWA?
SUWA, RIGHT?
SUWA, HUH?

"I'M NOT IN LOVE WITH NAHO..."

I'M A LIAR.

I MEANT IT AS A JOKE...

...BUT NAHO LOOKED ME RIGHT IN THE EYE WHEN SHE ANSWERED.

THAT'S WHY I WAS KIND OF LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

THE TWO OF US...

...STUDIED FOR A TEST TOGETHER IN THE LIBRARY.

THE TWO OF US...

...WATCHED FIREWORKS TOGETHER AT THE SCHOOL FESTIVAL.

"I DON'T WANT TO TALK ANYMORE."

THAT'S NONSENSE.

THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

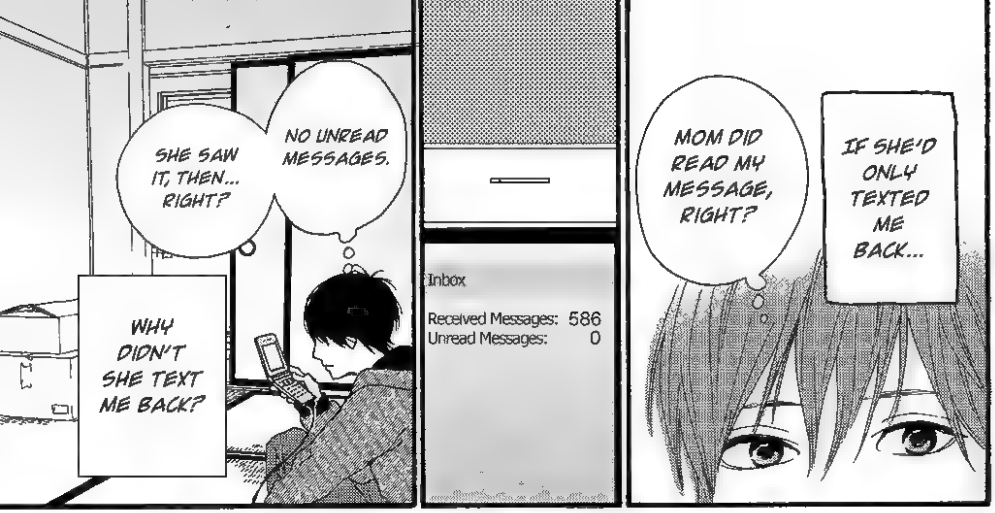
"STAY AWAY FROM ME."

I'VE NEVER WANTED TO BE CLOSER.

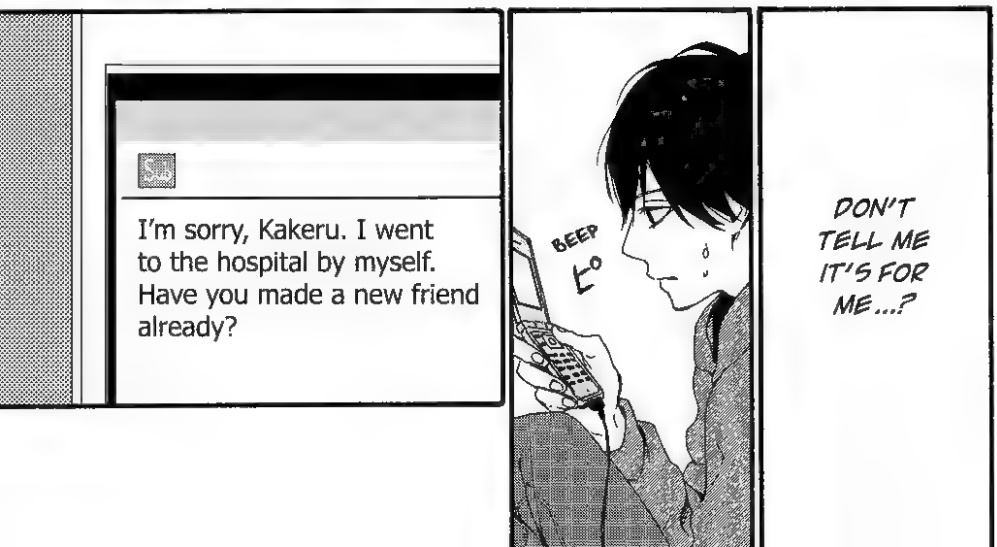
NAHO.
GOOD MORNING.
YOU KNOW...
I WANTED TO WALK WITH HER.
IT'S COLD TODAY...
...ISN'T IT?

I WANTED TO ASK HER SOME-THING.
BUT MORE IMPORT-ANT THAN THAT...
IDIOT.
"IT'S COLD." SHEESH.
YEAH... IT IS COLD.
I NEVER GOT TO APOLOGIZE TO MOM.
...BUT I SHOULD REALLY APOLOGIZE.
I'VE BEEN IGNORING IT LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED...
...I HAVEN'T APOLOGIZED TO HER FOR NEW YEAR'S YET.
CLACK
I'LL APOLOGIZE THEN.
I'M SURE I'LL GET TO SEE MOM AGAIN WHEN I DIE.

MOM'S CELL PHONE...
I WONDER IF MOM HAS A GRUDGE AGAINST ME.
HM?
SOME-THING FELL.


WHY DIDN'T SHE TEXT ME BACK?
SHE SAW IT, THEN... RIGHT?
NO UNREAD MESSAGES.
Inbox
Received Messages: 586
Unread Messages: 0
MOM DID READ MY MESSAGE, RIGHT?
IF SHE'D ONLY TEXTED ME BACK...

AN UNSENT TEXT...?
Draft Messages Box
Unsent Messages. 1
SHE SHOULD'VE CHEWED ME OUT...


Su
I'm sorry, Kakeru. I went to the hospital by myself. Have you made a new friend already?
BEEP
DON'T TELL ME IT'S FOR ME...?

There are many things I have to apologize to you for.

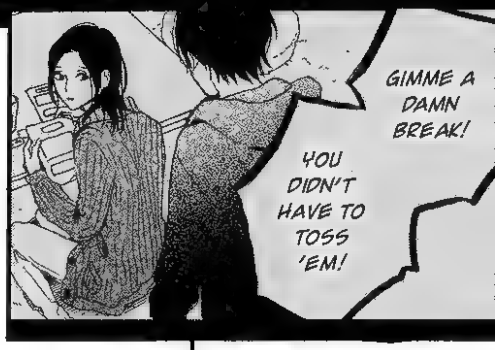
I noticed that you were getting bullied by the seniors in your club at the high school in Tokyo.

I couldn't really ask you about it because you hid it from me.

But I thought changing schools would solve the problem, so I moved us here to Matsumoto.

I'm sorry for divorcing your father when you were young, even though you loved him.

But he was a violent man and I couldn't stand to see him hurt you. That's why I divorced him.




I didn't want you to join a club here and be hurt again.

I was also worried about whether you would be able to make good friends.

I'm sorry for being so selfish. I tried to help you, but didn't consider your feelings.

Ultimately, I'm the one who hurt you.

I'm sorry for getting in the way.
From now on, I want you to have fun, Kakeru. I want you to do what you want to do.
I'm sorry for getting in the way.
I've been so selfish.
I'M SORRY.
THIS IS MY FAULT. I'M SORRY.
KAKERU, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
I WANTED HER TO TALK TO ME LIKE THIS IN THE END.
UNTIL NOW, I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING.

DO YOUR SINS BECOME ATONED FOR?
DO YOUR REGRETS DISAPPEAR, TOO?
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE.
I WONDER IF ANYONE WOULD BE SAD IF I DIED.
I WONDER IF IT WOULD GET BETTER TOMORROW.
I WONDER WHO NAHO GAVE THAT CHOCOLATE TO.

キィ
SKREEEEEE
I GUESS NONE OF IT REALLY MATTERS.

# CHAPTER 20

...AND TALKING ABOUT KAKERU MADE ME FEEL LIKE WE WERE ALL A GROUP AGAIN.

GATHERING TOGETHER LIKE THIS TODAY...

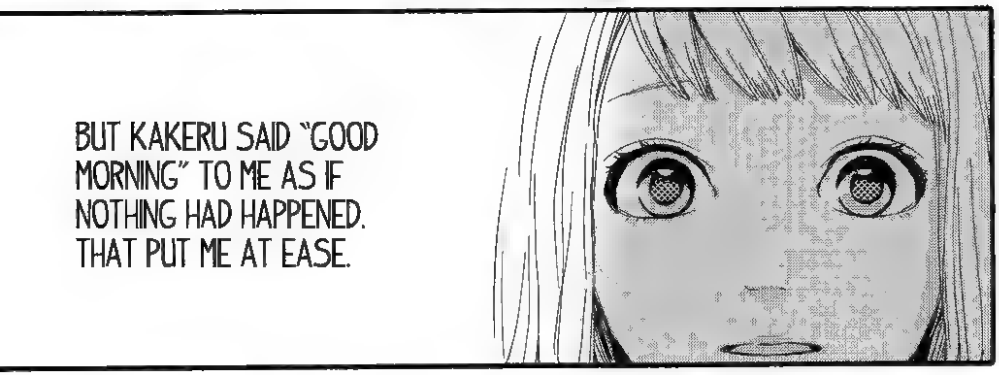
AFTER KAKERU DIED, THE REST OF US SORT OF DRIFTED APART.

THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS...
...ARE BEAUTIFUL, AREN'T THEY...
...KAKERU?
ALL OF MT. KOBO LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEEN DYED THE COLOR OF CHERRY BLOSSOMS.
SUWA AND I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR KAKERU HERE EVERY YEAR.

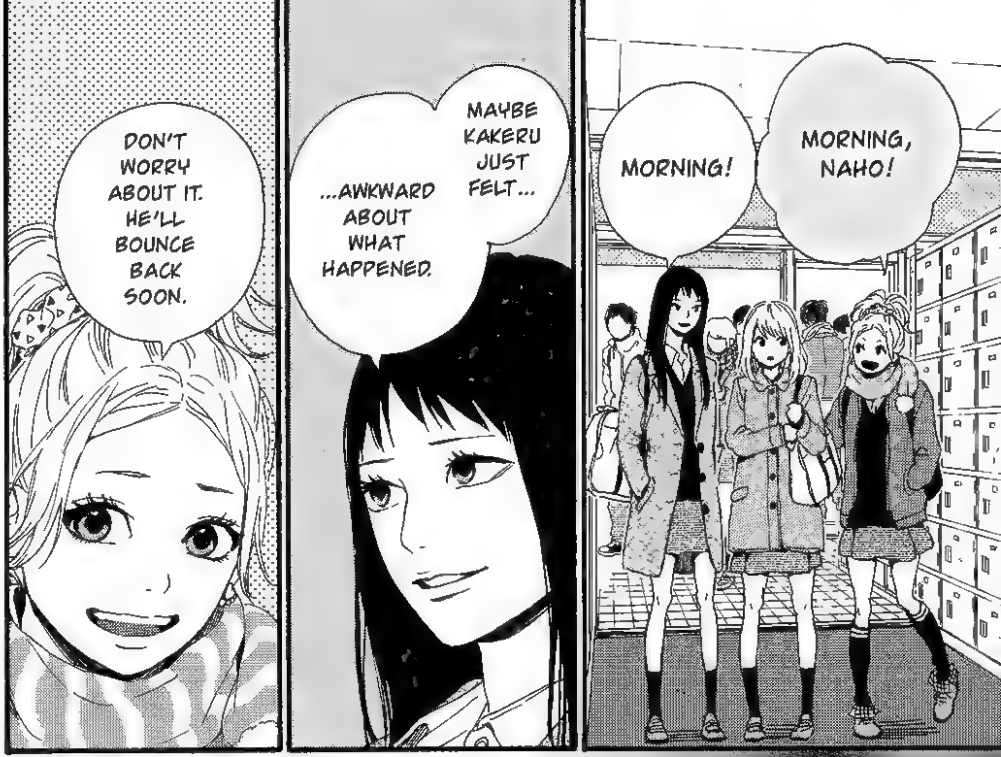
JANUARY 7TH

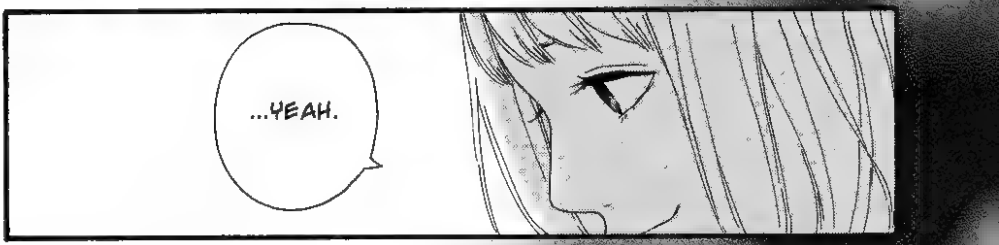
AS WINTER VACATION ENDED, THE FIGHT I HAD WITH KAKERU ON NEW YEAR'S EVE WAS STILL UNRESOLVED. THAT MORNING, I SAW KAKERU BY THE DOORS AT SCHOOL. BUT I COULDN'T ACT NORMAL.

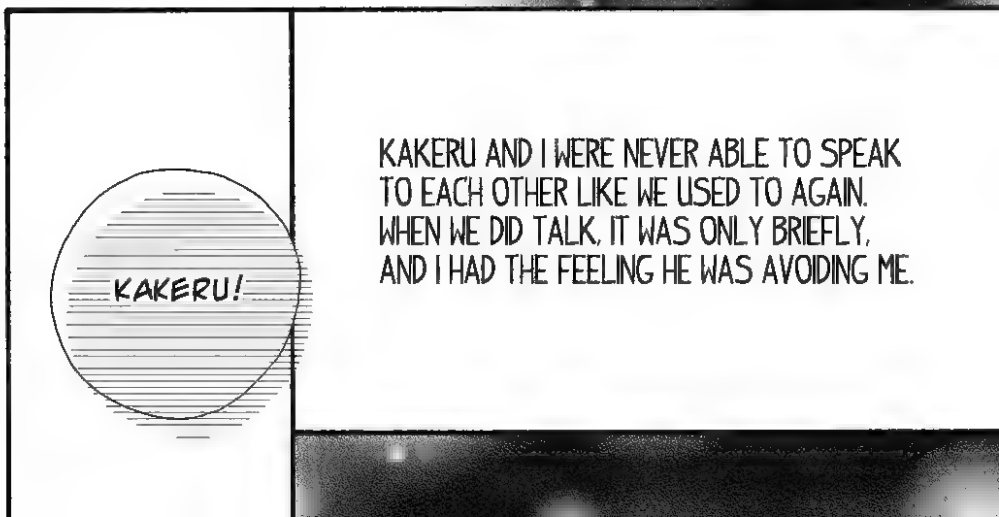
GOOD MORNING...
...KAKERU.

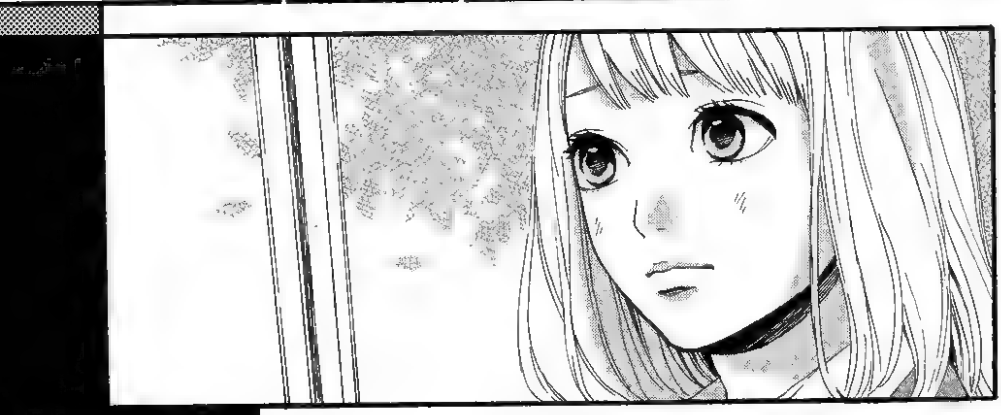

BUT KAKERU SAID "GOOD MORNING" TO ME AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED. THAT PUT ME AT EASE.

NAKA-YAMA, WAIT UP!
AH, SORRY.
MY CELL PHONE BROKE.
HUH?
I KEPT TRYING TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU OVER THE BREAK...
KAKERU...


DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. HE'LL BOUNCE BACK SOON.
...AWKWARD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED.
MAYBE KAKERU JUST FELT...
MORNING!
MORNING, NAHO!


...YEAH.


KAKERU!
KAKERU AND I WERE NEVER ABLE TO SPEAK TO EACH OTHER LIKE WE USED TO AGAIN. WHEN WE DID TALK, IT WAS ONLY BRIEFLY, AND I HAD THE FEELING HE WAS AVOIDING ME.



THE NEXT DAY AND THE DAY AFTER THAT,
WE EXCHANGED GREETINGS, BUT DIDN'T TALK.
HE NEVER BROUGHT UP WHAT HAD HAPPENED ON
NEW YEAR'S EVE, SO I PUT IT OUT OF MY HEAD, TOO.

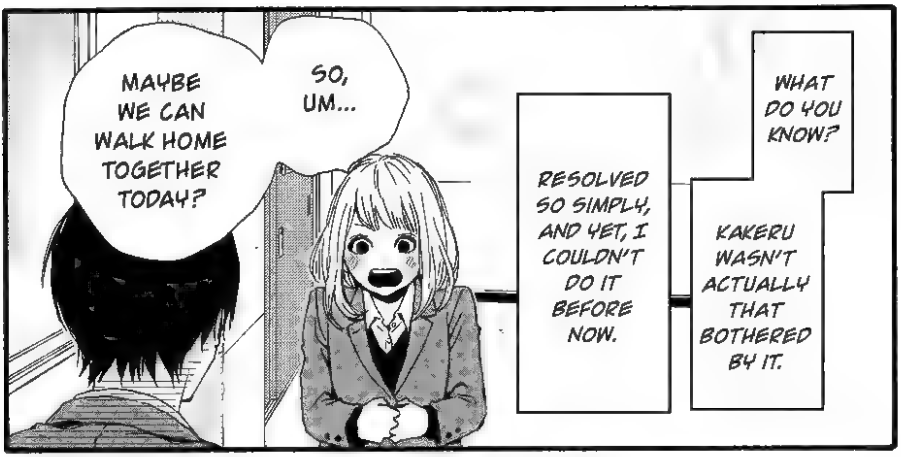
I WANT YOU TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH KAKERU AND TALK TO HIM A LOT TO KEEP THE RIFT BETWEEN US FROM WIDENING.
KAKERU!
GOOD MORNING!
I WANT TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU!!
UM...
MORNING.
UM...
SUWA!

EVEN IF IT DOESN'T GO WELL, BE SURE TO APOLOGIZE THIS TIME.

I'M SORRY FOR BEING...
...SO INSENSITIVE ON NEW YEAR'S EVE AND HURTING YOU.
I SPOKE OUT OF SELFISHNESS, WITHOUT KNOWING HOW YOU FELT.

NAHO...
I'M SORRY I ACTED LIKE SUCH A HEEL.
YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG, NAHO.
JUST THE OPPOSITE. IT'S MY FAULT FOR MAKING YOU WORRY.
NOT AT ALL! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR!
SO... UM...
I WANT TO MAKE UP...
...IF YOU DON'T MIND!
Ha ha!

THANK GOODNESS...
IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAD A FIGHT.
"MAKE UP" THOUGH?
HUH? REALLY?!
ha ha ha!
CONSIDER IT DONE.
YEAH, SURE.


SO, UM...
MAYBE WE CAN WALK HOME TOGETHER TODAY?
RESOLVED SO SIMPLY, AND YET, I COULDN'T DO IT BEFORE NOW.
KAKERU WASN'T ACTUALLY THAT BOTHERED BY IT.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

I'LL WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE DONE!
THAT'S OKAY.
BUT I'VE GOT THE CLUB TODAY.
I... I MEAN, JUST THE TWO OF US...

HM...
BUT IT WON'T BE FINISHED UNTIL DARK.
WHY DON'T WE DO IT ANOTHER DAY?
...
NUH UH.
I'LL WAIT FOR YOU.

IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE A CURFEW OR ANYTHING.
WHENEVER YOU FINISH, KAKERU...
NO, I DON'T WANT YOU TO WAIT.
LET'S DO IT ANOTHER DAY.

"MAKE UP"?
NO. WE HAVEN'T RESOLVED IT YET.
KAKERU IS AVOIDING ME.
JUST APOLOGIZING ISN'T GOING TO CLOSE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US...
AH!
CLASS IS ABOUT TO START, HUH?
DING DONG
DING DONG

HEY, LET ME BORROW SOMETHING TO WRITE WITH!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
!
I FORGOT MY PENCIL CASE.
...
KAKERU...
WANT TO USE THIS?
...
THAT'S OKAY. I ALREADY BORROWED SOMETHING.
WOULD AN ERASER HELP...?
I HAVE AN EXTRA.
SURE.

"I FORGOT MY PENCIL CASE."
"YOU CAN USE MY EXTRA MECHANICAL PENCIL AND ERASER."
"HUH?! ERASER, TOO?!"
"WOW, NAHO. IT'S LIKE YOU KNEW I FORGOT IT!"
LET'S GET STARTED.
Take your seats.
RATTLE
RATTLE
MONO
THANK YOU.

EVEN THOUGH I'M FOLLOWING THE LETTER, IT'S NOT WORKING OUT.
WHAT CAN I SAY TO KAKERU...
...TO MAKE HIM SMILE?
AT THIS POINT, IT'S LIKE THE TWO OF US ARE FURTHER APART THAN WHEN WE FIRST MET.
HOW CAN I GET BACK TO THE WAY WE WERE?
WILL TALKING TO HIM LIKE THIS REALLY BE ENOUGH...
...TO CLOSE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US?

I MAY LOSE HIM BECAUSE OF WHAT I SAID.
THIS...
THAT...
IT ALL...
...MIGHT GO TO WASTE.
"I DON'T WANT TO TALK ANYMORE."
MAYBE...
"STAY AWAY FROM ME."
...HE ALREADY HATES ME.
TAKA-MIYA.
!

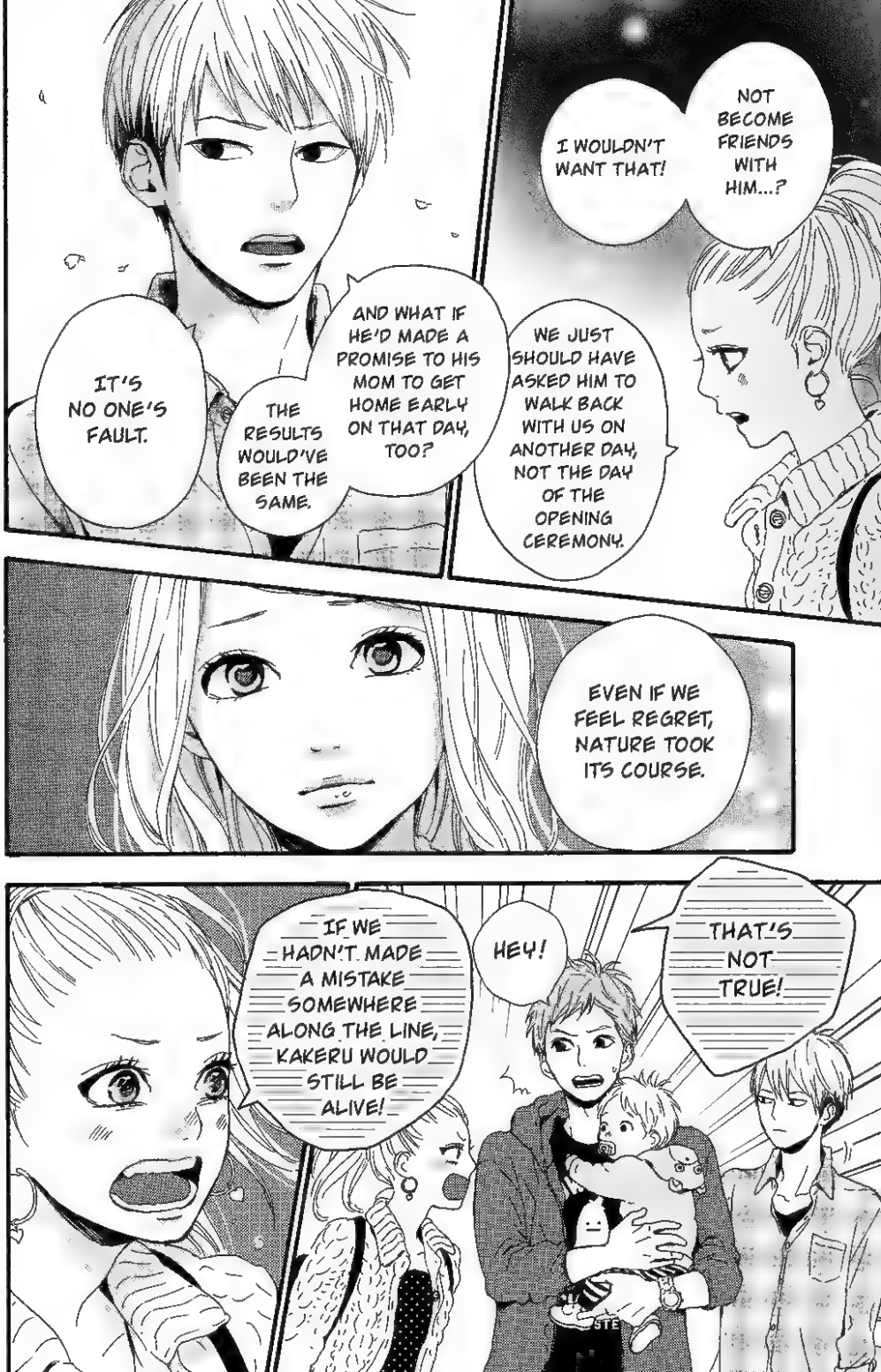
TAKAMIYA.
READ...
...THE NEXT PASSAGE.
...
WHAT'S WRONG, TAKAMIYA?
TAP
STOP.

I'LL...
...READ THE PASSAGE.
ガタ
RATTLE

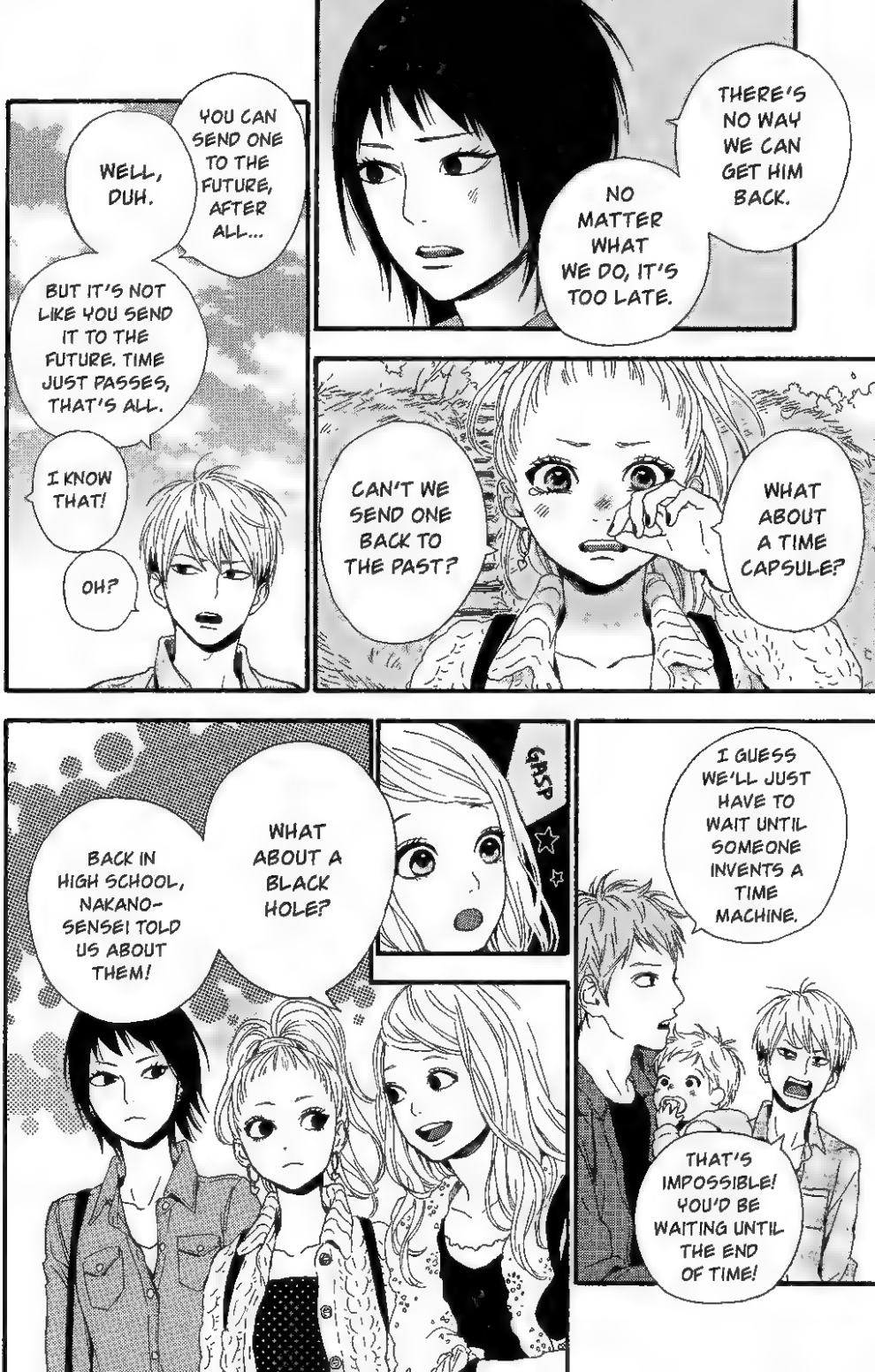
"I HAVE MY EYE ON YOU."
"I'M CURIOUS."
I WONDER IF KAKERU...
...STILL FEELS THE WAY HE DID BACK THEN.

IN THE SPRING, WE'LL VIEW THE BLOOMING CHERRY BLOSSOMS ON MT. KOBO.
IN THE SUMMER, WE'LL GO TO KAMI-KOCHI.
IN THE FALL, WE'LL SEE THE RED LEAVES AT ALPS PARK.
IN THE WINTER, WE'LL GO TO MATSUMOTO CASTLE WHEN IT'S SNOWING.
THE PROMISE THE SIX OF US MADE WHEN WE BURIED THE TIME CAPSULE.
LET'S FOLLOW THROUGH ON THE WHOLE THING.

EVEN NOW, I OFTEN THINK ABOUT THAT DAY WE FIRST MET...
...AND WALKED HOME WITH KAKERU.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WAS TEN YEARS AGO. IT FEELS SO WEIRD.
BUT...
...MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T HAVE...
...INVITED HIM TO WALK BACK WITH US AFTER THE OPENING CEREMONY.
WHO WAS IT THAT DID THAT?
I INVITED HIM.
ME, TOO.
I INVITED HIM, TOO.
IT'S MY FAULT.
THEN IF WE HADN'T BECOME FRIENDS WITH KAKERU...
...HE WOULD STILL BE ALIVE?


IT'S NO ONE'S FAULT.
THE RESULTS WOULD'VE BEEN THE SAME.
AND WHAT IF HE'D MADE A PROMISE TO HIS MOM TO GET HOME EARLY ON THAT DAY, TOO?
WE JUST SHOULD HAVE ASKED HIM TO WALK BACK WITH US ON ANOTHER DAY, NOT THE DAY OF THE OPENING CEREMONY.
I WOULDN'T WANT THAT!
NOT BECOME FRIENDS WITH HIM...?
EVEN IF WE FEEL REGRET, NATURE TOOK ITS COURSE.
IF WE HADN'T MADE A MISTAKE SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, KAKERU WOULD STILL BE ALIVE!
HEY!
THAT'S NOT TRUE!

WAAAAAH!
あぁぁぁぁ
DON'T FIGHT!
KAKERU'S WITH US TODAY!
UNH...
HE ISN'T HERE...
THIS ISN'T KEEPING OUR PROMISE.
WITHOUT KAKERU, IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.


THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN GET HIM BACK.
NO MATTER WHAT WE DO, IT'S TOO LATE.
WHAT ABOUT A TIME CAPSULE?
CAN'T WE SEND ONE BACK TO THE PAST?
YOU CAN SEND ONE TO THE FUTURE, AFTER ALL...
WELL, DUH.
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU SEND IT TO THE FUTURE. TIME JUST PASSES, THAT'S ALL.
I KNOW THAT!
OH?
I GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL SOMEONE INVENTS A TIME MACHINE.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! YOU'D BE WAITING UNTIL THE END OF TIME!
GASP
WHAT ABOUT A BLACK HOLE?
BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL, NAKANO-SENSEI TOLD US ABOUT THEM!

NAKANO-SENSEI SAID TIME TRAVEL MAY BE POSSIBLE WITH A BLACK HOLE.
A BLACK HOLE.
YOU WEREN'T LISTENING, WERE YOU?
SO, WHAT WERE WE TALKING ABOUT?
NAKANO-SENSEI! THAT BRINGS BACK MEMORIES.
I wonder how he's doing...
THAT'S IMPOSSI-BLE!
...WE'LL BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THE PAST!
THEN IF WE GO TO SPACE AND ENTER A BLACK HOLE...
WHAT?!
All of what you're saying!
...SO GIVE IT UP!
THERE'S NO WAY TO FIX THE PAST...
A TIME MACHINE.
THEN WE'LL JUST HAVE TO BUILD ONE OUR-SELVES.
THIS ISN'T SOME SCHOOL PROJECT!
I SAID IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
BESIDES, EVEN IF YOU DID ENTER A BLACK HOLE, YOU'D NEVER BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THIS WORLD.
R... REALLY?

WELL, THERE IS A PLACE ON EARTH...
...CALLED A BLACK HOLE.
...
WHERE?! WHERE?! WHERE?!
WH...
IT'S JUST A MYTH, AND ALL...
...SO DON'T...
WHERE IS IT?!

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE.
ALSO CALLED THE DEVIL'S TRIANGLE. IT'S IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN.
OCEAN...?
FOR CENTURIES, SHIPS AND PLANES PASSING THROUGH THAT AREA...
...HAVE SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE.
ONE HYPOTHESIS GOES THAT THERE'S A BLACK HOLE.
THEN MAYBE THOSE VANISHING SHIPS AND PLANES...
...TRAVELED THROUGH TIME?
THAT'S WHAT SOME PEOPLE SPECU-LATE.

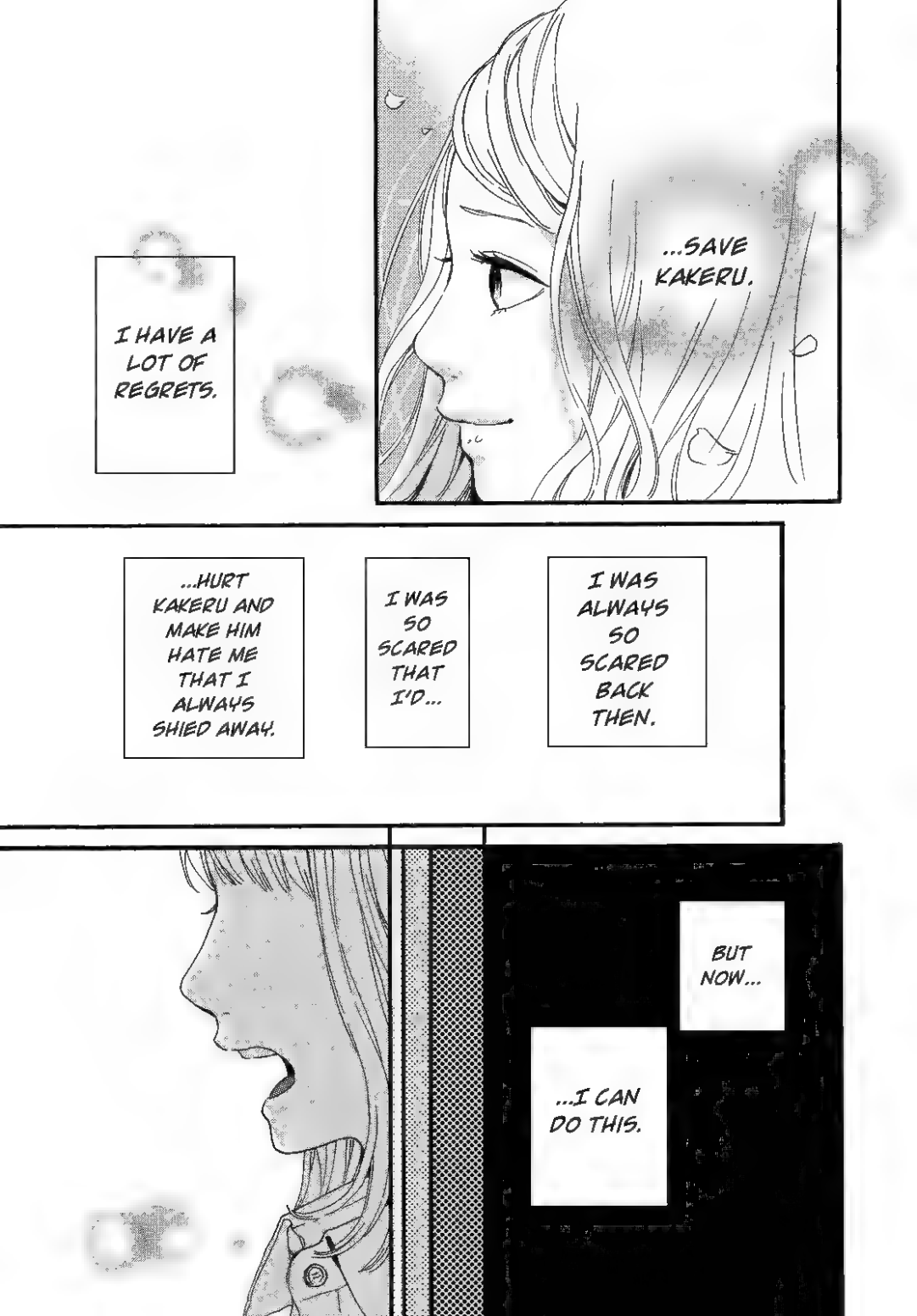
BUT RECENTLY...
...THOSE MYSTERIES HAVE BEEN CLEARED UP, SO IT'S ONLY A LEGEND.
TIME TRAVEL ISN'T POSSIBLE...
IT ISN'T A LEGEND!
LET'S TRY GOING THERE!
BUT EVEN IF WE DID TRAVEL THROUGH TIME, WHO KNOWS WHERE WE'D END UP?
AND EITHER WAY, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO RETURN, RIGHT?
WHAT ABOUT LETTERS?
WHY DON'T WE JUST TRY SENDING LETTERS? LIKE IN A TIME CAPSULE?
THAT'S IT!

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF IT GOT SENT TO THE FUTURE INSTEAD OF THE PAST?
AND EVEN IF YOU SENT IT TO THE PAST, YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE IT WOULD BE DELIVERED!
HOW WOULD YOU GET LETTERS TO OUR PAST SELVES?
IN THIS TIME CAPSULE...
...DO YOU PLAN ON LEAVING A NOTE, LIKE, "PLEASE DELIVER THESE LETTERS TO OUR SECOND-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL SELVES IN APRIL 2012 AT THESE ADDRESSES"?
RIDICULOUS!
LIKE I KEEP SAYING, TIME TRAVEL IS IMPOSS...
THAT'S IT!

LET'S GO WITH THAT!
IF WE WRITE LETTERS TO OUR PAST SELVES AND PUT THEM OUT TO SEA...
WON'T WORK.
...WE MAY BE ABLE TO CHANGE THE FUTURE!
NO WAY.
WE'D HAVE TO MAKE A MIRACLE HAPPEN.
BUT IF WE DO...
IT WON'T.

...WE CAN SAVE KAKERU.

I WANT TO...


I HAVE A LOT OF REGRETS.
...SAVE KAKERU.
...HURT KAKERU AND MAKE HIM HATE ME THAT I ALWAYS SHIED AWAY.
I WAS SO SCARED THAT I'D...
I WAS ALWAYS SO SCARED BACK THEN.
BUT NOW...
...I CAN DO THIS.

...I DON'T CARE.

NOW...

...LOSE KAKERU.

I JUST DON'T WANT TO...

...OR HE HATES ME, FINE.

IF I HURT HIM...

WE MAY HAVE...
...LOST KAKERU...
...BECAUSE OF SOMETHING I SAID.

...THAT CAN'T...

...AND A FUTURE...

...THERE'S A FUTURE THAT CAN BE CHANGED...

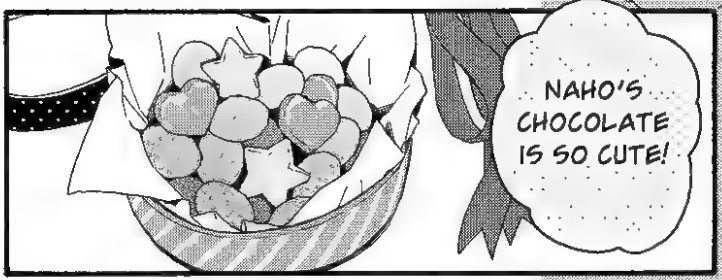
IF...

# CHAPTER 21

KAKERU...
GOOD MORNING!
MORNING!

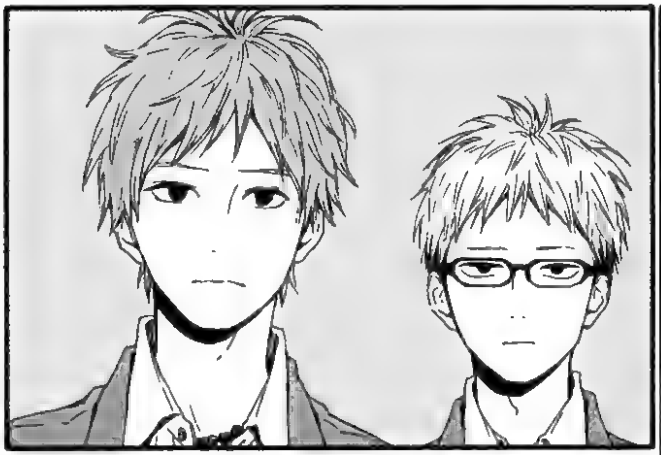
FEBRUARY 14TH
THE DAY BEFORE KAKERU DIES.

MAKE VALENTINE'S CHOCOLATE IN HOME EC.
I MADE CHOCOLATE FOR KAKERU WITHOUT LETTING ANYONE KNOW.

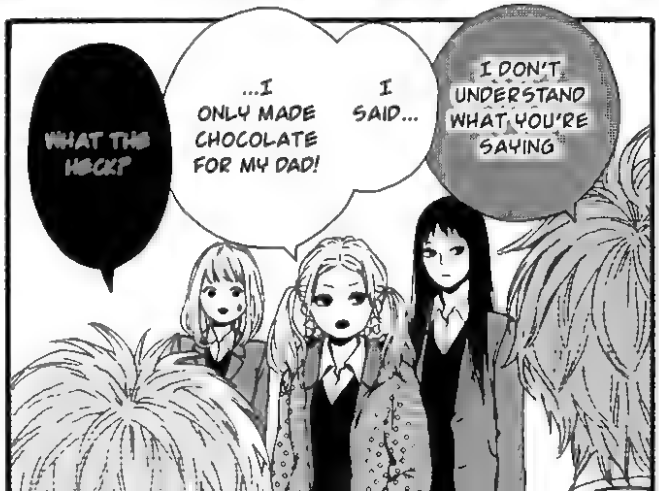


THE PLAN WAS TO GIVE HIM THE CHOCOLATE AND TELL HIM HOW I REALLY FELT.
BUT I COULDN'T START A CONVERSATION WITH HIM, EVEN THOUGH I HAD PLENTY OF CHANCES.

THE FIRST TIME WAS AFTER HOME EC, WHEN KAKERU SAW THE CHOCOLATE I WAS HOLDING AND ASKED ME WHO IT WAS FOR.

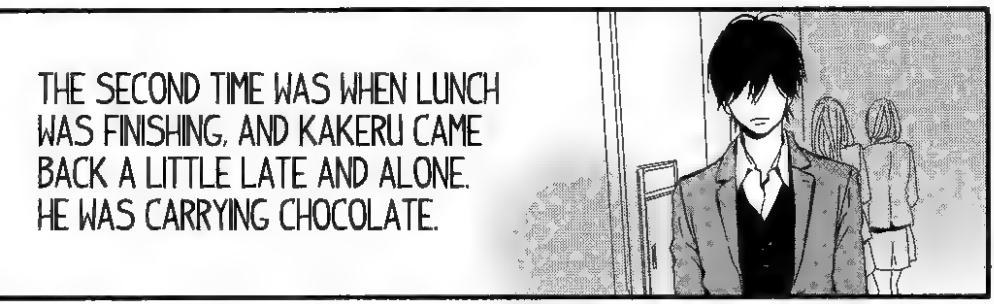


I WAS...
...WAITING FOR KAKERU TO SAY SOMETHING TO ME.




BUT I'M THE ONE...
...WHO HAS TO MAKE THE MOVE.

S-SORRY.
I FORGOT ABOUT YOU TWO...
!
YOU'LL REGRET NOT GIVING US CHOCOLATE FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIVES!
Write a letter of apology in the future!
I CAN IMAGINE YOU TRAILING AFTER US FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.


THE SECOND TIME WAS WHEN LUNCH WAS FINISHING, AND KAKERU CAME BACK A LITTLE LATE AND ALONE. HE WAS CARRYING CHOCOLATE.

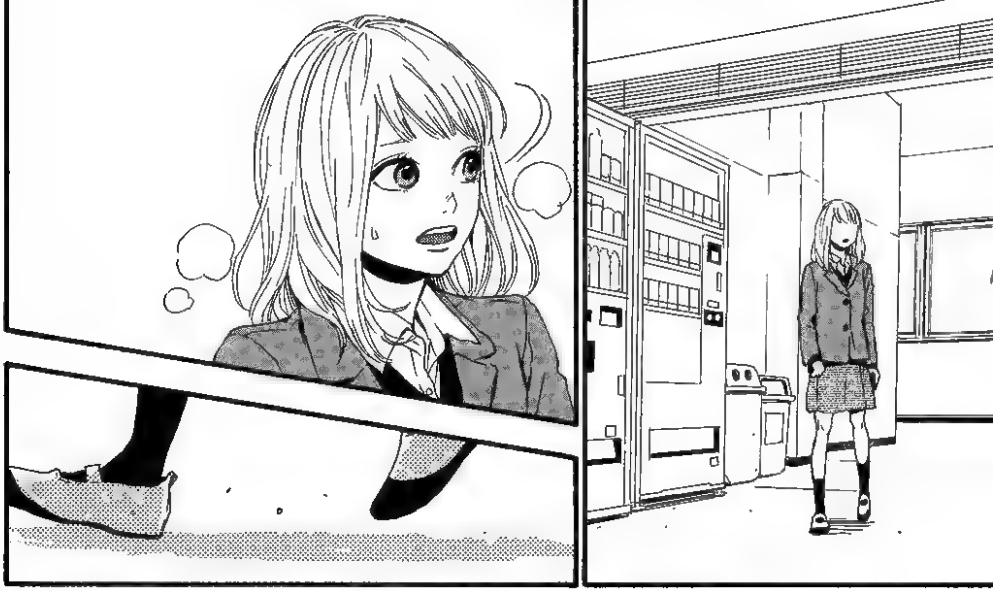
WHERE'D YOU GET THAT CHOCO-LATE?
KAKERU...

I DIDN'T KNOW HER...
...BUT SHE WAS CUTE.
THIS?
HOW'D YOU KNOW IT WAS CHOCOLATE?
A FRESHMAN GIRL...
...JUST GAVE IT TO ME.

FORGET HER!

DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT GONNA GO OUT WITH HER.
Ha ha!

THE THIRD TIME WAS AFTER FIFTH PERIOD. KAKERU WAS BUYING A DRINK FROM A VENDING MACHINE.



THE FOURTH TIME WAS MY LAST CHANCE.

AFTER SCHOOL, KAKERU TOLD ME, "GOOD LUCK GIVING IT TO HIM" AND THEN LEFT. I SHOULD HAVE STOPPED HIM THEN OR GONE AFTER HIM, BUT I WASN'T CAPABLE OF DOING THE SIMPLEST THING IN THE END.

BUT WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT NOW, I REALIZE HOW DIFFICULT THAT WAS FOR ME. IF I COULD DO IT OVER AGAIN, WOULD I SUCCEED IN GIVING KAKERU THE CHOCOLATE AND CONFESSING MY LOVE TO HIM?

DON'T PUT OFF WHAT YOU CAN'T DO TO "TOMORROW" OR "SOMEDAY." FOR KAKERU'S SAKE, DO ANYTHING YOU CAN DO.

AND ON THAT NOTE, WE'LL WRAP IT UP.

DING DONG DING DONG

CHANGE THE FUTURE. GOOD LUCK.

KAKERU!
ガラ
RATTLE
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR NARUSE, HE ALREADY LEFT.
...

THP

...YEAH!
SHOULD WE GO AFTER HIM, TOO?
...
IT'LL BE OKAY.
IT'LL BE OKAY.
I'M NOT GOING DOWN THE SAME PATH.
I WILL NOT RUN AWAY.
THIS TIME FOR SURE, I'LL GIVE HIM THE CHOCOLATE.
BUMP

UEDA-SENPAI!
LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
OW!
WHUMP
ドン

...
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
THE CHOCO-LATE!
HUH?!
I... I'M SORRY!
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU WERE GONNA GIVE THAT TO...
...BUT I WOULDN'T NOW IF I WERE YOU.
TOO BAD.
YOU'RE NOT ME.
HUH?
CHUCKLE
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO BE? CHOCOLATE?
IT GOT STEPPED ON.

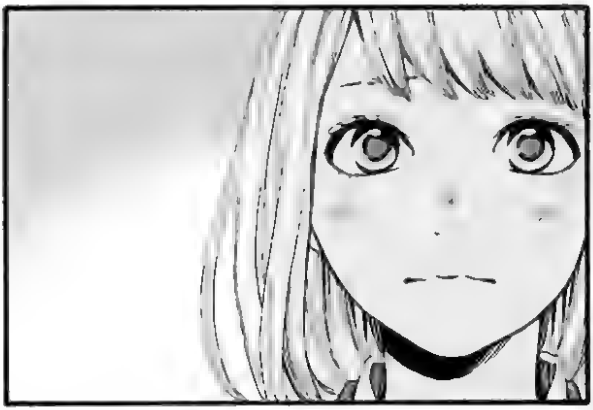
I'M GOING TO SEE KAKERU...
...SO PLEASE STEP ASIDE!
THE CHOCOLATE IS IMPORTANT.
I HAVE TO CHANGE THE FUTURE.
...
BORING.
TCH.

I JUST HAVE TO CHANGE IT.
ガチャ CLACK
?

RUSTLE
There's something I want to give you, so don't go home yet.
KAKERU!!

I PROMISE I WILL GIVE IT TO YOU, THOUGH.
...BUT I'M SORRY. I DON'T HAVE IT RIGHT NOW.
THERE WAS SOMETHING I WANTED TO GIVE YOU...
HUFF
HUFF
...
SO... WILL YOU WAIT A LITTLE WHILE?
WELL, SEE YA.
I... DON'T NEED ANYTHING.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

WAIT.
I WANT TO TALK TO YOU, EVEN IF IT'S JUST FOR A COUPLE OF MINUTES.
I... DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANY REGRETS.
WHAT SHOULD I SAY TO KAKERU?
HOW CAN I GET HIM TO SMILE?
I'M THINKING, BUT I CAN'T COME UP WITH ANY ANSWERS.
ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOMETHING I WANT HIM TO KNOW.



I GOT A FINAL TEXT FROM KAKERU ON FEBRUARY 15TH.

HE ASKED WHO I'D GIVEN THE CHOCOLATE TO, AND SAID HE FELT BAD ABOUT GETTING ANGRY AT ME ON NEW YEAR'S EVE. I REPLIED TO HIS TEXT, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF HE READ IT OR NOT.

*IF WE'D SOLVED THE MIS-UNDER-STANDING, THEN...*

*WE SHOULD'VE TALKED ABOUT IT.*

*THAT WAS BOTHERING KAKERU ALL THIS TIME...*

I WANT YOU TO TELL HIM WHAT WAS IN MY REPLY. FACE TO FACE. TELL HIM...

"I'M NOT HURT."

"...OR IF WE FIGHT. I JUST WANT TO TALK TO YOU, KAKERU."
"I DON'T CARE IF I GET HURT..."
"...IT'S HARD NOW, NOT BEING ABLE TO TALK LIKE WE USED TO."
"BUT..."
"I'M SORRY. IT'S MY FAULT."
"I'M SORRY, KAKERU."

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, NAHO.
I...
...WAS WEAK...
...SO I KEPT RUNNING AWAY.
I WAS SCARED...
...THAT IF I HURT YOU, YOU WOULD HATE ME.
AND I COULDN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF THAT...
...SO I DIDN'T WANT TO GET CLOSE.

THE TRUTH IS, I DID WANT YOU TO GIVE ME CHOCOLATE.
I'M SORRY FOR ALWAYS LYING TO YOU.
WHEN YOU ASKED ME TO WALK HOME TOGETHER...
...I WAS THRILLED.
TO BE HONEST...
...I WANT TO BE WITH YOU, NAHO.
WHEN YOU KEPT TRYING TO TALK TO ME...
...AND SAID GOOD MORNING, IT WAS THE HIGH POINT OF MY DAY.
...ME, TOO.

KAKERU...
I'VE BEEN RUNNING AWAY...
...ALL THIS TIME.
I...
...W... W... WA...
THE FUTURE HAS CHANGED A LOT.
I MIGHT HAVE BEEN AFRAID TO LOOK AT THE LETTER EVEN MORE...
...FEARING THAT ITS CON-TENTS...
...AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT WON'T MATCH UP AT ALL.

FEARING A FUTURE THAT'S NOT WRITTEN IN THE LETTER...
I WANT TO...
...GO OUT WITH YOU...
...KAKERU.

BUT I WANT TO KNOW, A LOT MORE.
WHAT YOU ENJOY DOING, WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY...
I KNOW YOU...
...AND YET, I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOU.

I WANT TO BE CLOSE TO YOU SO I CAN ALWAYS HELP YOU, KAKERU.
I WANT TO KNOW ALL OF IT.
WHAT I CAN SAY THAT WOULD PLEASE YOU...
BUT...
...YOU ONCE SAID THAT IF I ASKED YOU OUT, YOU WOULD AGREE.
...I'M NOT GOING TO DATE ANYONE.
BUT I TOLD YOU...
BUT...
THAT'S OKAY. DON'T WORRY.
I MAY LIE AND RUN AWAY FROM YOU AGAIN.
NAHO, I CAN'T MAKE YOU HAPPY.
IF YOU'RE HAPPY, I'M HAPPY, KAKERU.

...TELL ME EVERY-THING.
YOU CAN...

I HATE MYSELF.
I CAN'T FORGIVE MYSELF.
...IT'S SO HARD.

SOME-
TIMES...
...I JUST WANT TO THROW IT ALL AWAY. YOU AND EVERYTHING ELSE, NAHO.
THAT'S WHEN I LOSE THE POINT OF LIVING.
BUT I KNOW I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS.
I WANT TO BE STRONG.
I WANT TO...
...BE HAPPY.
...YEAH.
LET'S DO IT.

AS LONG AS YOU LIVE...
...THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.
I'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY, KAKERU.
LET'S LIVE OUR LIVES TOGETHER.

...OKAY.
...THAT IF I GOT CLOSE TO KAKERU, HE WOULD DISAPPEAR.
I HAD A FEE-LING...
I THOUGHT IF I TOUCHED HIM, HE MIGHT BREAK.
NAHO...
GIVE ME...
...YOUR CHOCO-LATE.

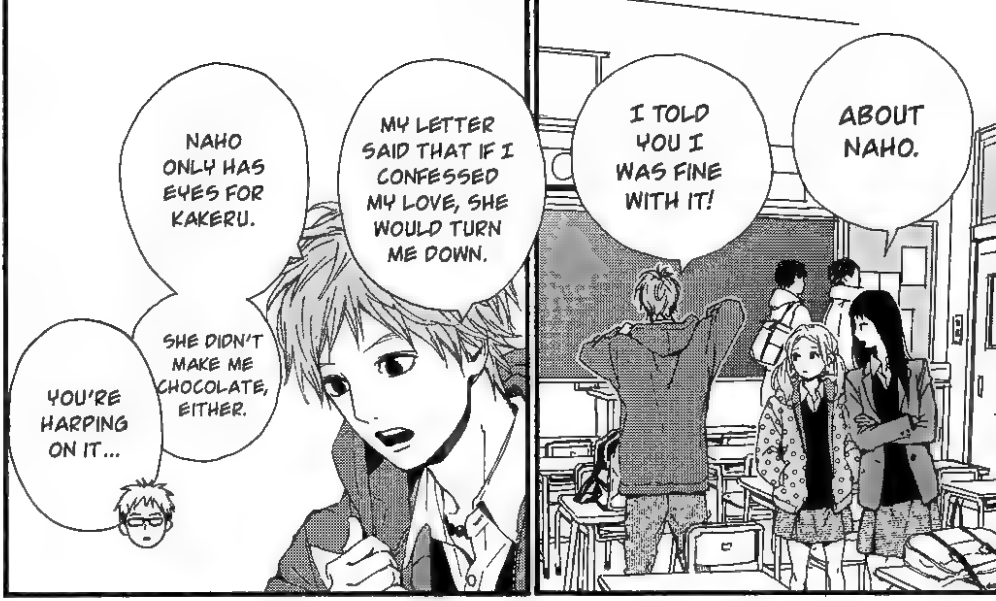
THE CHOCOLATE YOU'RE HOLDING BEHIND YOUR BACK.
BUT...
...IT'S CRUSHED.
I DON'T CARE.
THANK YOU.

TO ME...
...KAKERU IS LIKE A LIVING TREASURE.
KAKERU!

NAHO GAVE YOU THE CHOCOLATE, RIGHT?!
WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER?!

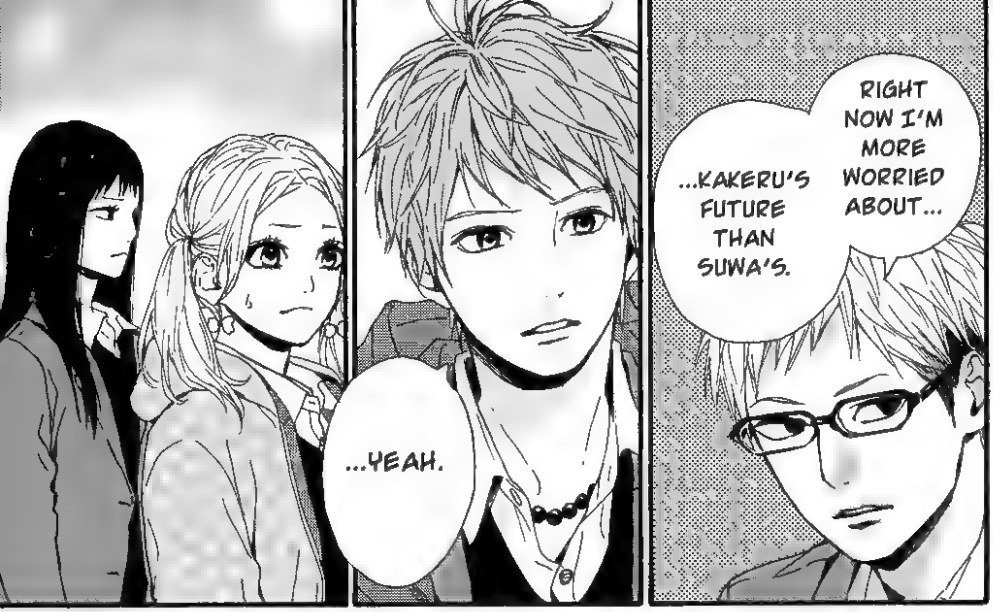
CONGRATU-
LATIONS!

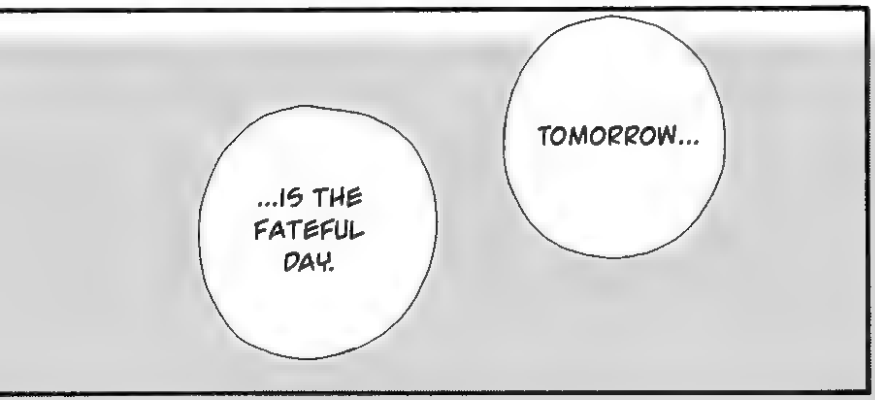
MAY KAKERU'S TOMORROW...
...BE CHANGED.
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?


NAHO ONLY HAS EYES FOR KAKERU.
MY LETTER SAID THAT IF I CONFESSED MY LOVE, SHE WOULD TURN ME DOWN.
SHE DIDN'T MAKE ME CHOCOLATE, EITHER.
YOU'RE HARPING ON IT...
I TOLD YOU I WAS FINE WITH IT!
ABOUT NAHO.

THIS WORLD IS FOR KAKERU TO BE HAPPY.
MOST OF ALL, MY FUTURE SELF IS ALREADY LIVING THE DREAM.
I'M FINE WITH HOW IT'S WORKED OUT HERE.

BESIDES, I'VE GOT ONE OTHER DREAM THAT I'M GOING TO MAKE COME TRUE!
OH?
SO DON'T TELL NAHO OR KAKERU ANYTHING ABOUT IT!
YES!!
Like about being married!
YEAH, YEAH.
That's a secret for life!!
WELL... NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WERE SO STUBBORN ON NEW YEAR'S EVE, SUWA.
IT WAS FOR KAKERU'S SAKE, WASN'T IT?




...TO SAVE KAKERU.

OUR FUTURE SELVES, TEN YEARS FROM NOW, CREATED THIS WORLD...

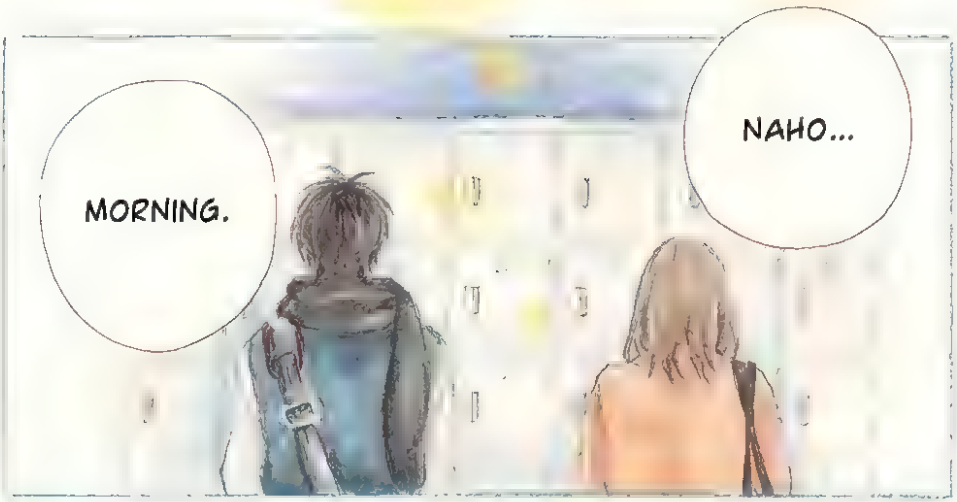
...MUST BE A NEW ONE, AN OFFSHOOT CREATED WHEN THE LETTERS WERE DELIVERED.

THIS WORLD...

..SHE WOULD SEE KAKERU.

...HAD NO IDEA THIS WOULD BE THE LAST DAY...

MY FUTURE SELF, TEN YEARS FROM NOW, WHO SENT ME THE LETTER...



IN THE SPRING OF MY 16TH YEAR...
...I RECEIVED A LETTER.

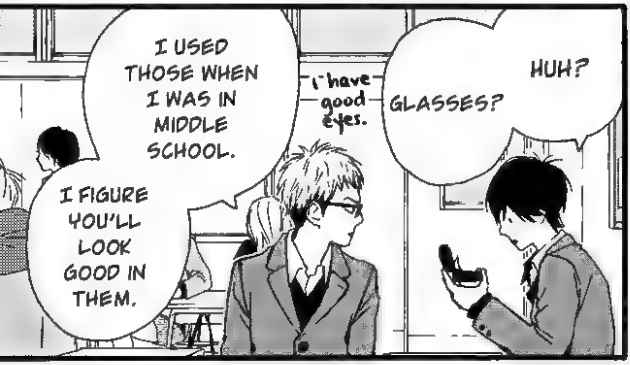
HOW DID THIS GET DELIVERED?
WHY DID IT COME TO ME...?

FEBRUARY 15TH
IN THE MORNING, I MET KAKERU
BY THE ENTRANCE.
HE SAID, "ISN'T IT COLD?"
I REPLIED, "YEAH, REALLY."

THAT WAS THE LAST TIME I TALKED TO KAKERU.

I HAVE TO MAKE SURE WHAT'S WRITTEN IN THE LETTER FOR TODAY...

...DOESN'T HAPPEN.



I can't see out of these...
KAKERU!
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MY PASSES!
LET'S AIM TO JOIN A PROFESSIONAL TEAM!
Bros to pros!
THIS IS COMING OUT OF THE BLUE...
ALL RIGHT, ENOUGH! YOU ALREADY TOLD ME THAT.
THE SHOTS YOU MADE AT THIS MORNING'S PRACTICE WERE AWESOME!
WHERE'D YOU GET ALL THOSE SNACKS FROM?
AZU AND TAKAKO.
THEY TOLD ME TO EAT 'EM WITH YOU.
FUUMP
POTATO SNACKS
CHOCOLATE
EVEN THOUGH WE ALL AGREED BEFOREHAND TO ACT NORMALLY...
...I GUESS IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR US.

UM... I HAVE...
...SOMETHING TO GIVE YOU, TOO.
EVERYONE'S ACTING KIND OF WEIRD.
HEE HEE
I PUT IN YOUR FAVORITE MASHED POTATOES, TOO.
REALLY?!
WHOA! I HAVEN'T HAD A NAHO BENTO IN A LONG TIME!
ACTUALLY...
...KAKERU...
THANK YOU!

THIS...
YOUR HAIR CLIP?
THIS IS...
...MY TREASURE.
BECAUSE YOU GAVE IT TO ME.

IF I'D BOUGHT IT FOR MYSELF...
...IT WOULDN'T BE A TREASURE.
EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR ME IS A TREASURE, KAKERU.
BUT YOU'RE FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN ANY TREASURE.

I ALSO FORGOT TO TELL YOU THIS.
REMEMBER AT THE ATHLETIC FESTIVAL, THE EVENT WHERE YOU PULLED DOWN THE POLE?
YOU WERE THE COOLEST ONE THERE!
I KNOW YOU WERE EMBARRASSED, BUT YOU WERE COOL RUNNING AROUND HALF-NAKED, TOO!
Slender!
HUH?
...NAHO.
AH...
COME TO THINK OF IT, THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVEN'T REALLY BEEN CLEAR ABOUT WITH YOU.
?
THANK YOU.
BUT I'M TOUCHED.
YOU'RE EMBARRASSING ME NOW...
Sorry!...

I LOVE YOU.

COME ON.
LET'S EAT.
WHAT'S WRONG?
NOTHING.
I'M JUST SO HAPPY...

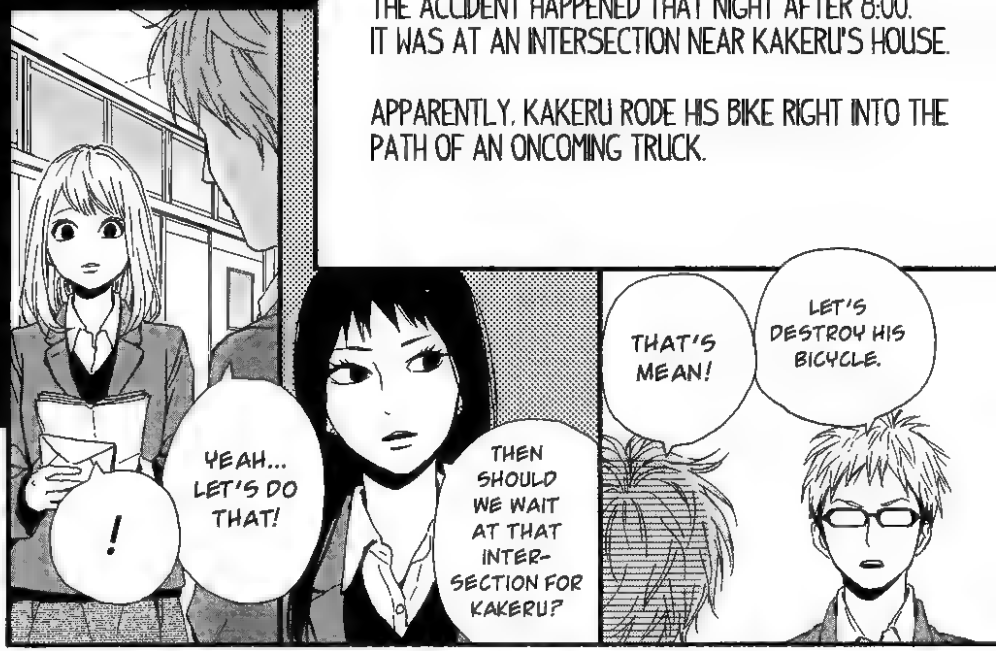
MY FEELINGS FOR HIM ARE MUCH DEEPER THAN BEFORE.

I HAVE A LOT MORE MEMORIES WITH KAKERU NOW.

BUT SOMETIMES I GET ANXIOUS.

I'M AFRAID OF THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

I HAVE TO GO WITH MY GRAND-MA...
...TO THE HOSPITAL.
SORRY. TODAY DOESN'T WORK FOR ME.
AZU TOLD ME TO INVITE YOU.
HMM...
...I SEE...
YEAH.
...AFTER EIGHT O'CLOCK, RIGHT?
THE ACCIDENT HAPPE-NED...
flip flip
WILL KAKERU BE OKAY ON HIS OWN?
NOT AFTER THE DAY OF THE OPENING CEREMONY.
WE CAN'T PRESSURE HIM TO GO WITH US.


THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT AFTER 8:00. IT WAS AT AN INTERSECTION NEAR KAKERU'S HOUSE.
APPARENTLY, KAKERU RODE HIS BIKE RIGHT INTO THE PATH OF AN ONCOMING TRUCK.
!
YEAH... LET'S DO THAT!
THEN SHOULD WE WAIT AT THAT INTER-SECTION FOR KAKERU?
THAT'S MEAN!
LET'S DESTROY HIS BICYCLE.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?

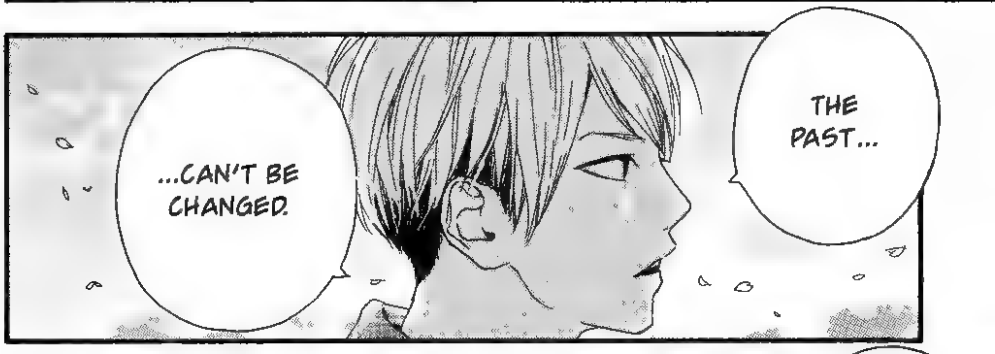
EVEN IF IT TURNS INTO A BORING DAY...

...AND NOTHING SPECIAL HAPPENS.

WE STUDY FOR SIX HOURS, TALK ABOUT NOTHING...

...NEEDS TO BE A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER DAY.

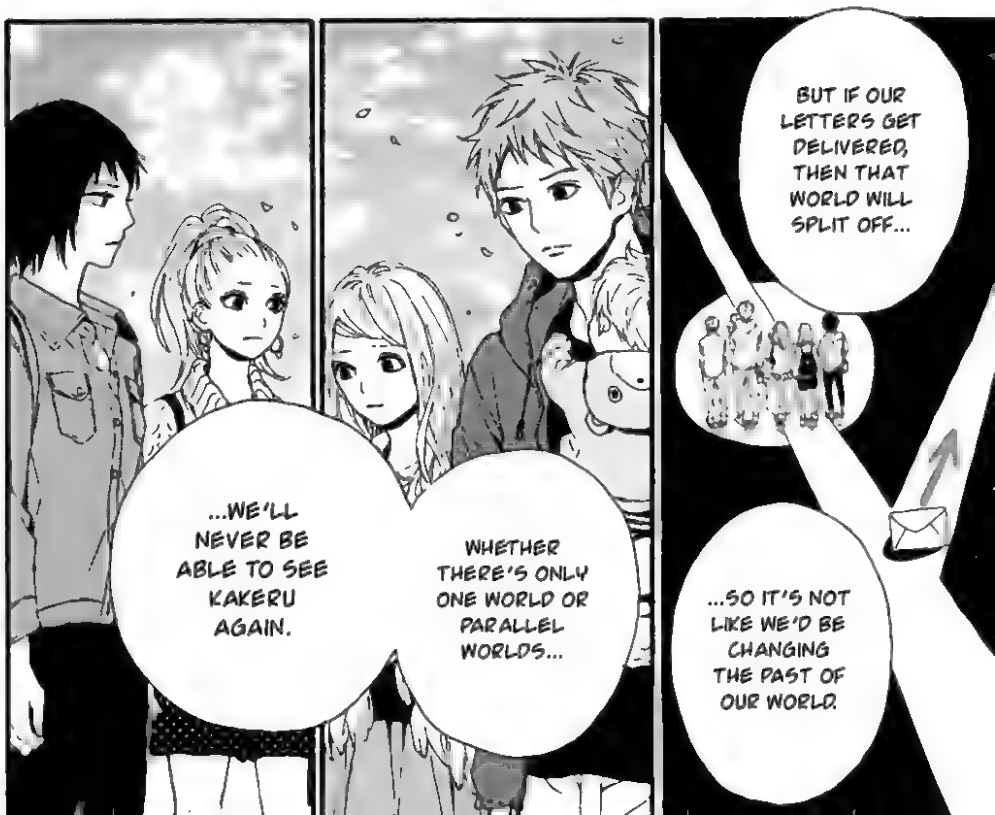
...I'LL HAVE NO COM-PLAINTS.
...WITHOUT ANYTHING MISSING...
...AS LONG AS TOMORROW IS THE SAME...


...CAN'T BE CHANGED.
THE PAST...

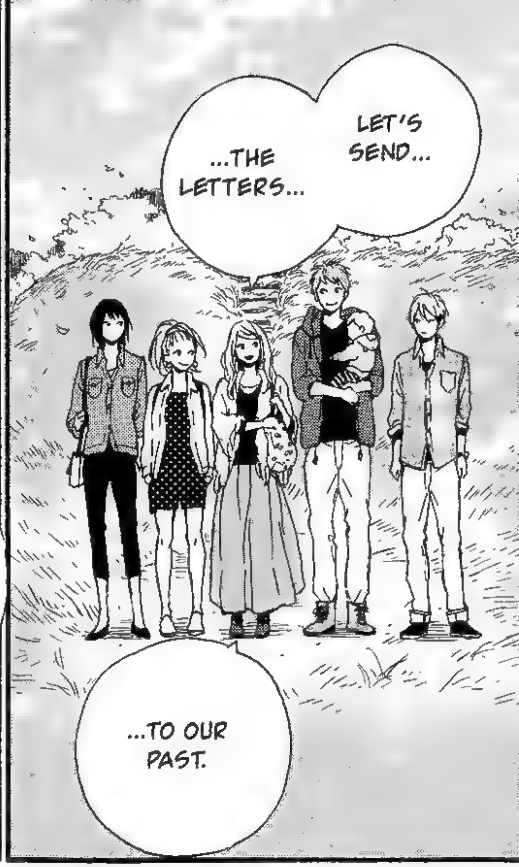
...OUR REGRETS CAN'T BE ERASED.
I'M SAYING, EVEN IF OUR LETTERS GET DELIVERED...
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING.
And don't try to exclude me.
ENOUGH OF YOUR NEGATIVITY. IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE, WE WON'T INCLUDE YOUR LETTER, HAGITA.
...HUH?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
ASSUME THERE ARE NO PARALLEL WORLDS AND THIS IS THE ONLY WORLD.
THE LETTERS REACH OUR PAST SELVES...
...WHO MANAGE TO SAVE KAKERU BECAUSE THEY'RE WARNED BEFOREHAND OF HIS DEATH...
...AND THE FUTURE IS PAINTED OVER AS THE "KAKERU DIED" EVENT DISAPPEARS.
...IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
IF THAT HAPPENED, THERE WOULD BE NO LETTERS TO WARN US OF KAKERU'S DEATH.
THE LETTERS WOULD CEASE TO EXIST THE MOMENT THE "KAKERU DOESN'T DIE" FUTURE COMES INTO BEING...
...AND THE PAINTED-OVER FUTURE WOULD PROBABLY RETURN TO ITS ORIGINAL FORM.

BUT IF THERE ARE PARALLEL WORLDS, A PARADOX WON'T BE FORMED, SO HE COULD BE SAVED, RIGHT?
YOU'RE SAYING KAKERU CAN'T BE SAVED BECAUSE IT WOULD FORM A PARADOX?
OR MAYBE THE LETTERS JUST CAN'T BE SENT BACK INTO THE PAST IN THE FIRST PLACE.
IF A PARALLEL WORLD IS INVOLVED...
...IT MAY BE POSSIBLE.


...WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE KAKERU AGAIN.
WHETHER THERE'S ONLY ONE WORLD OR PARALLEL WORLDS...
BUT IF OUR LETTERS GET DELIVERED, THEN THAT WORLD WILL SPLIT OFF...
...SO IT'S NOT LIKE WE'D BE CHANGING THE PAST OF OUR WORLD.

LET'S SAVE KAKERU IN A PARALLEL WORLD.
A PARALLEL WORLD.
THEN LET'S GO WITH THAT.
I WANNA DO SOMETHING FOR KAKERU.
JUST FEELING REGRET DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING.
LET'S MAKE A WORLD WHERE KAKERU CAN SMILE FOREVER.
YEAH.




BACK THEN...

THAT TIME... THAT MOMENT...

...IF I'D NOTICED WHAT WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO ME...

...MAYBE KAKERU WOULD BE HERE TODAY.

I'D WANT HIM TO BE THE HAPPIEST BOY IN THE WORLD.

...ALL KIND OF FUN EXPERIENCES.

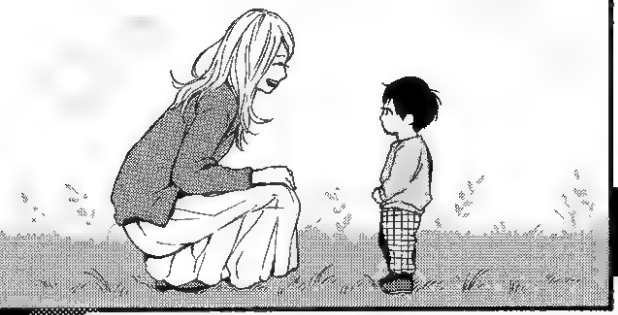
I'D WANT HIM TO HAVE...

...ONE MORE TIME...

IF I COULD SEE KAKERU...

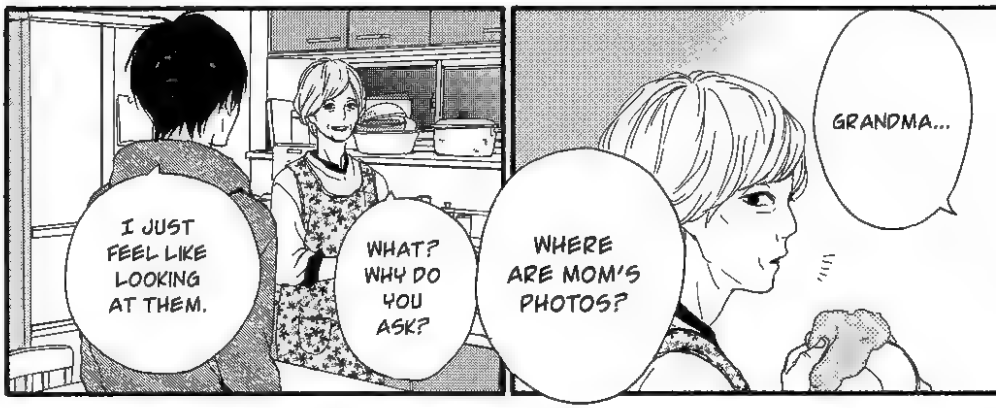
...WHEN HE WAS LITTLE.

...I'D WANT TO MEET HIM...



...I WANT ONE MORE CHANCE TO SAVE KAKERU.

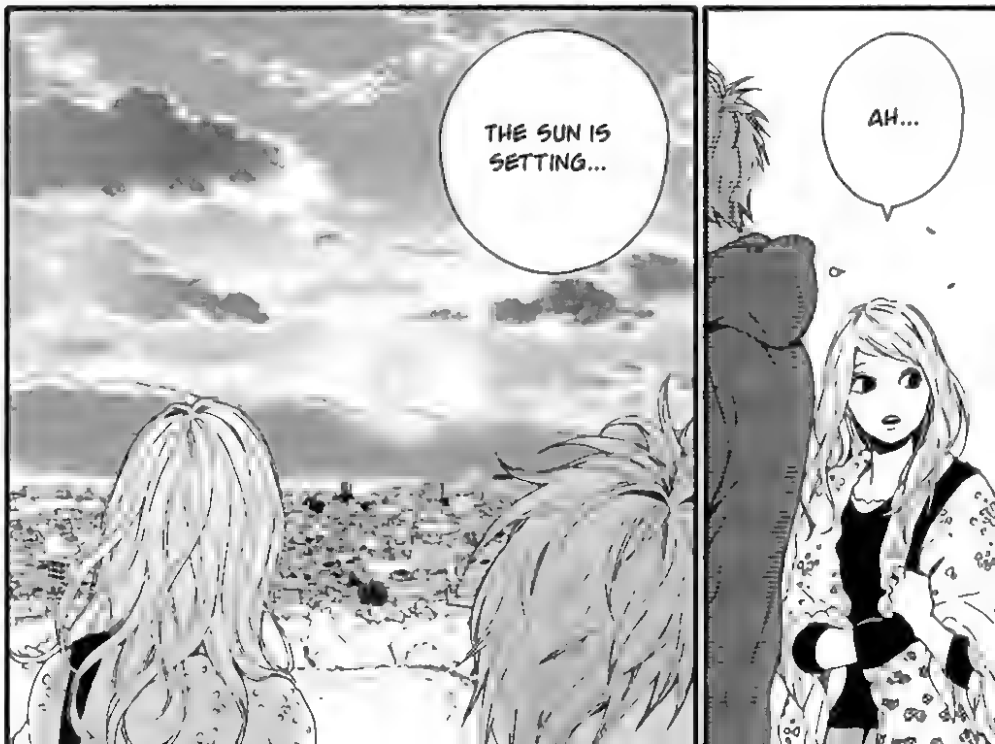
IF IT'S POSSIBLE...


GRANDMA...
WHERE ARE MOM'S PHOTOS?
WHAT? WHY DO YOU ASK?
I JUST FEEL LIKE LOOKING AT THEM.

THEY'RE IN THE CLOSET UPSTAIRS, IN THE BACK ROOM.
RATTLE RATTLE
CLACK

19:35
STAY AWAY...
...KAKERU.

AWW...
HE'S SLEEPING.
HE'S HAD A LONG DAY.
YEAH, MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL IT A DAY.


THE SUN IS SETTING...
AH...

THAT WAS ALL
WE CRIED BECAUSE KAKERU WASN'T THERE TO SEE IT
BECAUSE THE SUNSET WAS BEAUTIFUL
WE DIDN'T CRY
IT'S WHAT ALL OF THE LETTERS SAY, SO IT HAS TO BE
THIS IS WHERE THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED, RIGHT?
KAKERU ISN'T COMING
20-10

KAKERU?
HE LEFT JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO...
IF KAKERU ISN'T THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE ANYMORE, THEN WE'RE GOOD...
...BUT WHY DON'T WE GO TO HIS HOUSE, JUST IN CASE?
...
HE SUDDENLY JUST RAN OUTSIDE, SO I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE WENT...
LET'S LOOK FOR HIM!
WAIT!
HIS BIKE...
...IS RIGHT OVER THERE!

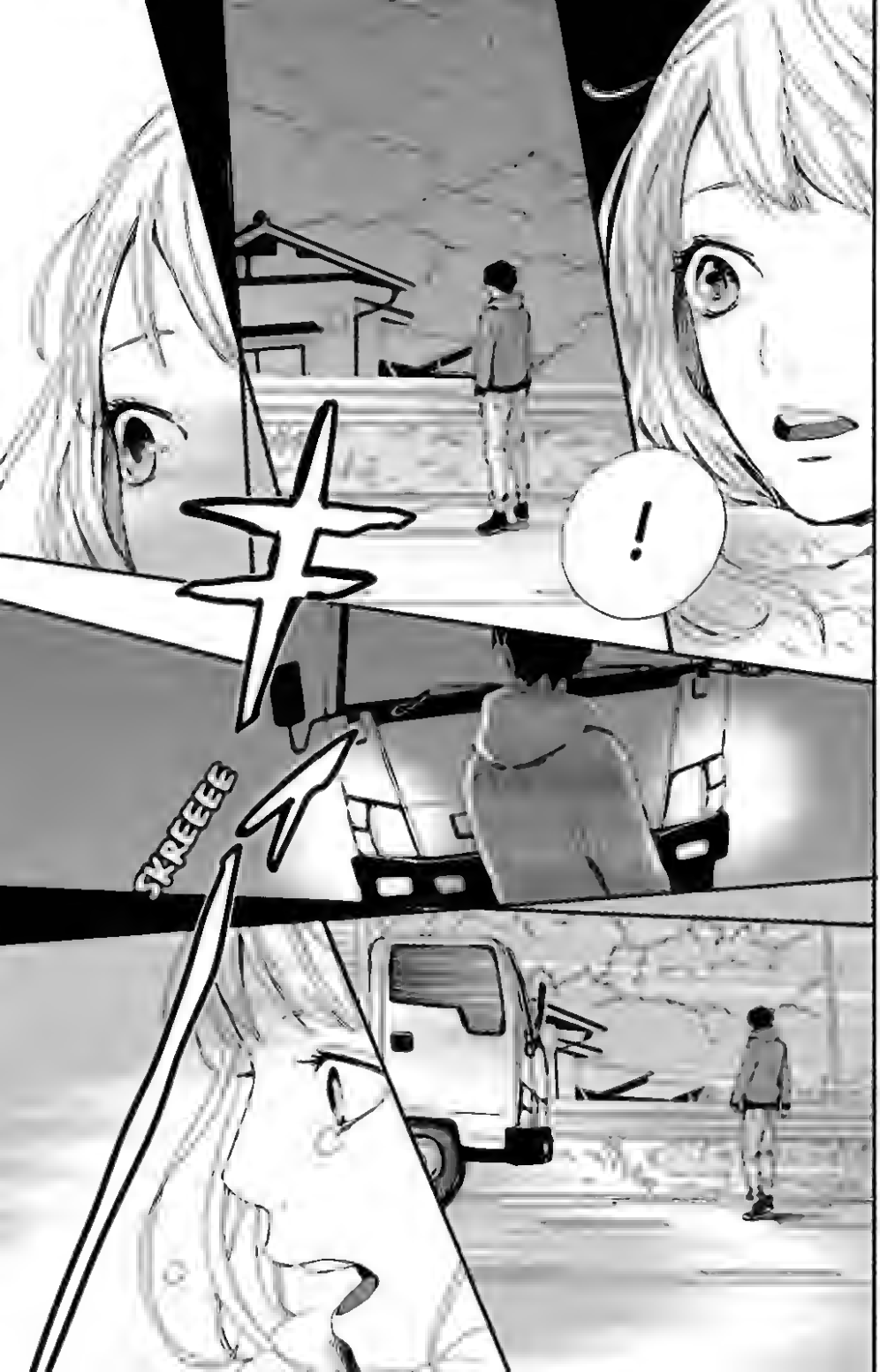
I WAS AFRAID THIS WOULD HAPPEN.
WE CHANGED THE FUTURE TOO MUCH.
WHY DOESN'T THIS...
...MATCH UP WITH ANYTHING IN THE LETTERS?
BUT IF IT BECAME THE SAME FUTURE AS IN THE LETTER, THERE'D BE NO POINT.

YEAH.
AS LONG AS WE CAN SAVE HIM...
...THERE'S NO PROBLEM.

LET'S SPLIT UP AND SEARCH FOR HIM.
YEAH!

EVEN IF...
...WE SAVE KAKERU FROM THE ACCI-DENT...
...WE HAVEN'T SAVED KAKERU
...HIS HEART AND MIND.
WE NEED TO SAVE...
HOW DOES HIS FACE LOOK RIGHT NOW?
HELLO! HAGITA?!
WE GOT A SIGHTING FROM A DOG-WALKER
HE SAW A KID WHO SOUNDS LIKE KAKERU ON THE STREET YOU TWO ARE HEADING TOWARDS
GOT IT.
WE'LL HEAD OVER THERE, TOO.
DON'T CRY.

DON'T GO ANYWHERE.
DON'T BLAME YOURSELF.
HUFF... HUFF...
LET'S RENDEZVOUS.
SAME HERE.
DID YOU SEE HAGITA?!
NO.
BUT IT'S PITCH BLACK OUT HERE, SO WE'VE GOT LOUSY VISIBILITY.
RIGHT NOW, WE'RE NEAR NAKAYAMA-SHO.

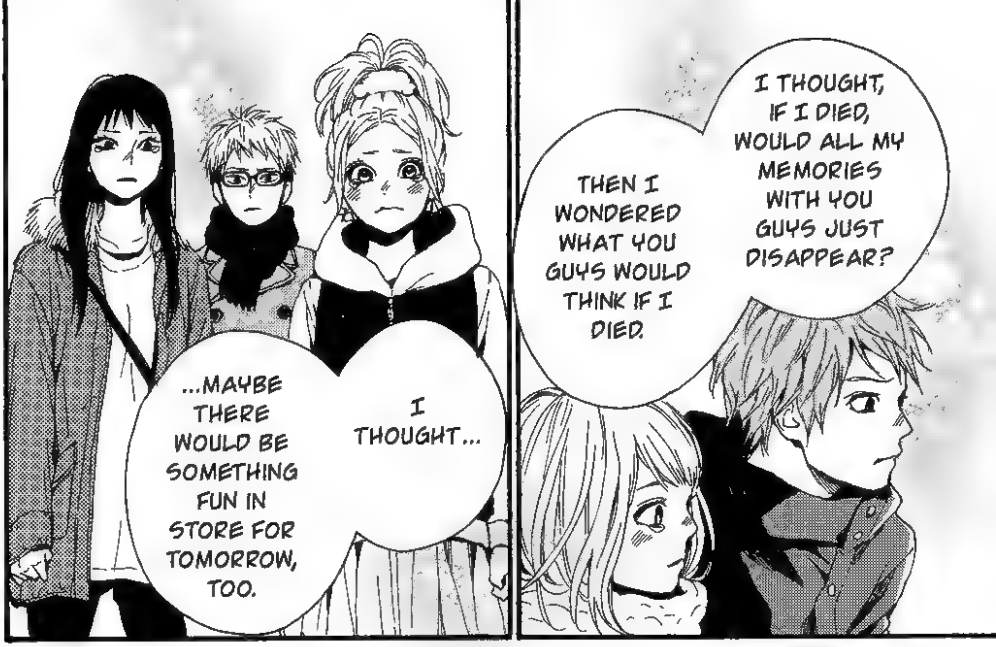

!
SKREEEE

KAKERU!
KAKERU OF ANOTHER EARTH...
...I'M SO SORRY I LET YOU DIE!
I DIDN'T REALIZE IT ON MY OWN.
SHE ONLY KNEW YOU WERE GONE.
YOU DID.
MY FUTURE SELF DIDN'T TEACH ME WHAT WAS IMPORTANT.

...THERE'S NO DO-OVER.
AFTER SOME-THING HAPPENS...
IT'S THE SAME, EVEN IN THIS WORLD. YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST.
KAKERU!!
HEY!

KAKERU!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
WHY DID YOU DO THAT?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
ARE YOU HURT?!
IS HE ALL RIGHT?

I THOUGHT I HAD TO APOLOGIZE TO MY MOTHER...
...I WANTED TO DIE.
...BUT...
...I COULDN'T DO IT.
I SUDDENLY BECAME...
...AFRAID TO DIE.


I THOUGHT, IF I DIED, WOULD ALL MY MEMORIES WITH YOU GUYS JUST DISAPPEAR?
THEN I WONDERED WHAT YOU GUYS WOULD THINK IF I DIED.
I THOUGHT...
...MAYBE THERE WOULD BE SOMETHING FUN IN STORE FOR TOMORROW, TOO.

NAHO...
...GAVE ME CHOCOLATE.
I THOUGHT...
...I DIDN'T WANNA DIE...
...JUST YET.
IT WASN'T A WASTE.
HE REALLY DID CHANGE.

KAKERU DID CHANGE.
THANK GOOD-NESS...
BUT...
...WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING HERE?
IT WAS...
...IN THE LETTERS.
...LETTERS?
THE LETTERS SAID...
...YOU WERE GOING TO COMMIT SUICIDE TONIGHT...
...AND THAT WE SHOULD SAVE YOU.
ALTHOUGH YOU MAY FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE.

TEN YEARS IN THE FUTURE...?
LIKE A RELAYED MESSAGE?
...TEN YEARS IN THE FUTURE.
WE EACH GOT A LETTER FROM OURSELVES...
...YEAH.
AND WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO GOT A LETTER FROM THE FUTURE.
AND SUWA, YOU SAID YOU'D SEEN A PHOTO OF ME WHEN I WAS LITTLE...
...SHE SAID SHE HADN'T SHOWN YOU ANY PICTURES.
...BUT WHEN I ASKED MY GRANDMA ABOUT IT...
THE LETTER...
...NAHO HAD TODAY...

DEAR KAKERU
DEAR KAKERU
THERE ARE LETTERS FOR YOU TOO, KAKERU
DEAR KAKERU
DEAR KAKERU
I'M SORRY KAKERU
I DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT YOU BECAUSE FIGURE BOY'S WERE STRONG.
I'M SO SORRY I DIDN'T PROTECT YOU
I WANTED TO HAVE A LOT MORE FUN WITH YOU AND TALK A LOT MORE WITH YOU
BUT I THOUGHT WE HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD TO DO THAT
I'M SORRY

I OFTEN THINK IF I'D DONE THIS OR THAT BACK THEN WOULD YOU STILL BE ALIVE?
WHERE DID I GO WRONG?
I SHOULD HAVE JUST ALWAYS CHOSEN WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU HAVE A GOOD TIME
I'M SORRY.

I NEVER IMAGINED THAT LOSING YOU WOULD BE THIS PAINFUL AND WOULD MAKE ME FEEL THIS LONELY.
I'M SORRY FOR TAKING YOU FOR GRANTED

I'M SORRY I COULDN'T SAVE YOU I WISH I HAD KEPT A CLOSER EYE ON YOU
I'M SO SORRY I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH PAIN YOU WERE IN

EVEN AFTER TEN YEARS.
I'M SURE THEY'LL FEEL IT FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.
...ABOUT LOSING YOU, KAKERU.
THEY ALL FELT TREMENDOUS REGRET...

IT'S... MY FAULT...?
NO!
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT...
YES, IT IS!
IT IS YOUR FAULT!
SO I SWEAR TO GOD, IF YOU DIE, I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU!
I'M SORRY...
...GUYS...

I'M SORRY, KAKERU...
WE KNEW...
...WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY OF THE OPENING CEREMONY.
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS IN THE LETTERS, WE WEREN'T ABLE TO AVOID IT.
I'M SO SORRY FOR INVITING YOU TO WALK HOME WITH US THAT DAY.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
...NO.
I WAS HAPPY YOU ASKED ME TO GO WITH YOU.

THANK YOU...
...FOR BEING MY FRIENDS.
PLEASE...
...DON'T LET THE FUTURE CHANGE.
LET'S STAY LIKE THIS FOREVER.
LET THIS MOMENT, WITH A SMILING KAKERU...
...CONTINUE INTO THE FUTURE.

HEY.
COME TO THINK OF IT, WHY DIDN'T YOU RIDE YOUR BIKE TONIGHT, KAKERU?
IN THE LETTERS, THAT'S WHAT IT SAYS YOU DID.
?

WELL...
...I WAS GOING TO, BUT THE GEARS WERE MESSED UP.
IT LOOKED LIKE SOMEONE TRASHED IT ON PURPOSE.

WHAT?
SOME PEOPLE DO SUCH MEAN THINGS.
I KNOW WHO THE VANDAL IS...

HAGITA!

DEAR KAKERU,

Dear Kakeru

DO YOU FORGIVE US?
I WAS STILL A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT THEN,
A CHILD WHO DIDN'T UNDERSTAND PRECIOUS EVERYDAY THINGS OR THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE.
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T SAVE YOU. I WISH I HAD KEPT A CLOSER EYE ON YOU.
I'M SO SORRY I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH PAIN YOU WERE IN.

IF YOU GIVE US ONE MORE CHANCE TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT,
WE'LL DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO PROTECT YOU.
I HOPE YOU WILL FORGIVE US AND LIVE.

APRIL 23, SPRING OF OUR 26TH YEAR
SHALL WE VIEW THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS ON MOUNT KOBO TOGETHER?

THE SUNSET ON THIS DAY IS SO BEAUTIFUL. THE VIEW FROM MOUNT KOBO, WITH THE ORANGE-TINTED SKY, TOWN, AND CHERRY BLOSSOMS... I WANT TO SEE IT WITH YOU, KAKERU.

WE'RE ALL WAITING FOR YOU.

IT SEEMS I QUIT THE CLUB AFTER YOU DIED.
YEAH.
HUH?
SUWA, YOU'RE NOT PLAYING SOCCER TEN YEARS FROM NOW?
WHO TOLD THEM?!
HAGITA?!
NO! IT WAS OBVIOUS!
...SO DON'T TALK ABOUT TEN YEARS IN THE FUTURE!
WE'RE ABOUT TO BURY A TIME CAPSULE...
DON'T SAY IT!
YOU'RE GONNA MEET MESSI, RIGHT?
YOU'RE GONNA BE A PRO SOCCER PLAYER, RIGHT?
BECOMING A SOCCER...
SORRY... I KNOW IT WAS YOUR DREAM...

SO THERE ARE PARALLEL WORLDS...
...WHICH MEANS...
...THERE ARE FUTURES WHERE ALL KINDS OF THINGS ARE DIFFERENT, RIGHT?
YEAH.
THERE MUST BE A FUTURE SOMEWHERE WHERE AZU AND HAGITA ARE MARRIED.
THERE ISN'T!

THEN...
...THERE'S A FUTURE WHERE SUWA AND NAHO ARE MARRIED TOO, HUH?

NO!
NO, NO, NEVER!
DOESN'T EXIST!
Really?!
Huh?

ALTHOUGH...
...I WISH THERE WERE ONE LIKE THAT.
ME, TOO!

Kakeru Naruse
LET'S JUST BURY THE DAMN TIME CAPSULE!
NOW HURRY UP!
Put the letters in the can!
But he looks happy!
He's embarrassed!

DEAR EVERYONE TEN YEARS IN THE FUTURE,

HOW ARE YOU ALL DOING?

ARE YOU ALL STILL FRIENDS TEN YEARS FROM NOW?

DO YOU STILL LAUGH TOGETHER?

DO YOU HAVE FUN EVERY DAY?

WHAT AM I DOING AT THIS MOMENT. TEN YEARS FROM NOW?

AM I STILL PLAYING SOCCER?

AM I MARRIED TO NAHO?

AM I TRULY ALIVE EVERY SINGLE DAY?

...CRY ALONE AGAIN...

...EVER...

IF YOU...

OR EVEN IF...

...THE DAY COMES WHEN YOU FIND JUST LIVING TO BE PAINFUL...

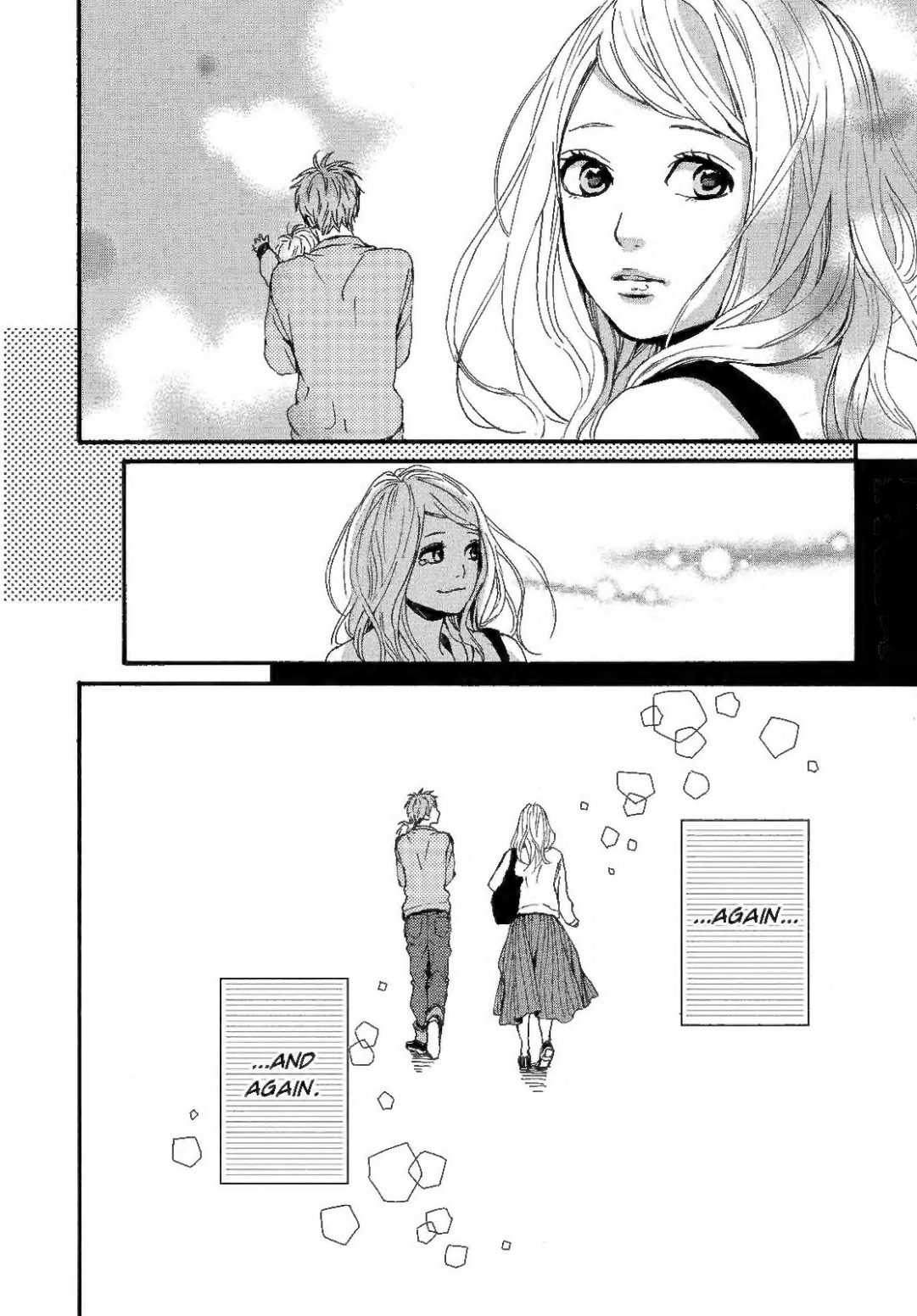
I AM.

YOU LOOK HAPPY ABOUT SOMETHING.

...KAKERU?

WHAT'S WRONG...

...THEN I PROMISE...
I'M GLAD...
...TO BE ALIVE.
THANK YOU...
...FOR SAVING ME.
...I'LL SAVE YOU...


...AGAIN...
...AND AGAIN.